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From Coronet to Crown

William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy, King of England
1027-1087

From an engraving by Vertue (English engraver, 1684-1756) in the British Museum

The Life of William the Conqueror

From the Early Chronicles

BY

SARAH HENRY BENTON

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An affectionate souvenir.

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FOREWORD

AMONG those whose works have largely contributed to the making of this book is Orderic Vital (Ordericus Vitalis), a delightful chronicler who lived almost his entire life, first as student and later as monk, at the Abbey of St. Evroul at Ouche in Normandy. Orderic Vital was born in England in 1075, although his father was from Orleans, having gone to England at the time of the Conquest in the train of Roger de Montgomery, later Count of Shrewsbury. Orderic Vital was therefore more or less contemporary of the times he depicts, as regards the Conquest, in his *Histoire de Normandie*. This latter is a work of three large volumes, the translation from the original Latin into French by M. Guizot being published for the first time in 1826. In it the history of Normandy, and its Dukes, especially the Conqueror, is delightfully interspersed with long and detailed accounts of Saints, and Brothers, crusades to the Holy Land, the migrations and vicissitudes of Holy Relics, and everyday happenings at Ouche, with which the history of Normandy has in reality little to do. But as a treasure-

trove of information of the times of which he writes, as seen by an observant monk, Orderic Vital has no equal.

The *Vie de Guillaume le Conquérant*, by Guillaume de Poitiers, and the *Histoire des Ducs de Normandie*, by Guillaume de Jumiège, both likewise translated into French by M. Guizot, follow Orderic Vital in point of time and interest. The Chronicles of William of Malmesbury and Maistre Wace both give delightful details of William the Conqueror from the Saxon, rather than the Norman point of view.

The *Histoire de Guillaume le Conquérant, Duc de Normandie, et Roi d'Angleterre*, published 1784, by l'Abbé Prévost—the same who wrote the immortal Manon Lescaut—was the book which inspired the writing of this one. Delightful details not easily found elsewhere are found in it, notably the description of Duke Robert's journey to the Holy Land, and the stories and legends of early times in Normandy. Freeman's *History of the Norman Conquest* has been freely drawn upon for much detail in Chapter XII and elsewhere this famous work has been of indispensable value to the author.

William the Conqueror's death-scene, slightly adapted, has been quoted with permission from Martin Rule's *The Life and Times of St. Anselm*, as it seems the most authentic and reasonable

account of an event so frequently misrepresented in literature and art.

There appears to be absolutely no account extant of William the Conqueror's funeral journey by river and sea from Rouen to Caen—the writer therefore, with an author's licence, has depicted it, following the customs and usages of the times, as it may well have been.

The author is indebted to Sir Theodore Andrea Cook not only for suggestions in the beginning as to sources of information for the life of William the Conqueror, but for the description of the old ducal Château in Rouen found in his book, *The Story of Rouen* (published 1899). The author would also like to express her appreciation and thanks for the helpful courtesy shown by Monsieur Celier, Archiviste du bureau des renseignements aux Archives Nationales de Paris, Mr. R. A. Coates, assistant MS. Department, British Museum, and the various other officials in the British Museum with which her work brought her in contact, as well as those who by means of correspondence, dating back in some cases many years, have given suggestions and aid, among them being Monsieur Maurice Prau, Directeur de l'école des Chartes, Paris, Monsieur L'archiviste departemental de la Seine-Inférieure, Rouen; Monsieur le Directeur de la Bibliothèque Nationale; Mademoiselle Abrahams, Bibliothécaire de la

Bibliothèque de Bayeux; and Monsieur le Curé de St. Gervais Rouen.

Other books besides those already mentioned, from some of which quotations have been made, are :—

Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normans, Augustin Thierry, published 1825.

History of the English People, J. R. Green, published 1874.

Antiquités Anglo-Normandes, Ducarel, translated from the English by A. L. Léchaudé d'Anisy, published 1823.

La Reine Mathilde. La Tapisserie-Broderie de Bayeux, Susanne Turgis, published 1912.

The Bayeux Tapestry, Rev. John Collingwood Bruce, LL.D., F.S.A., published 1856.

The Lives of the Queens of England, Agnes Strickland, published 1840.

La Broderie de la Reine Mathilde, by Madame Emma L —— (a very rare book).

La Vie de Guillaume le Conquérant, Guizot.

Memories of Many Years, 1839–1922, by Archbishop Seton.

Histoire des Français, J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi.

Histoire de Normandie, A. Albert-Petit, published 1911.

Guillaume le Conquérant, L. Todière, published 1860.

The 900th anniversary of William the Conqueror's birth will be celebrated with appropriate ceremonies in several places in Normandy during the Summer of 1927—should this book awaken more interest in places in France—Falaise, Caen, Rouen, Dives, Bayeux, Domfront—marked with the personality owing in a measure their interest to the traveller to the fruits of the munificence of this truly remarkable man, William the Conqueror, should it revive a livelier appreciation of the relics in England of Norman times, a desire to further study the marvellous achievements of the Normans not only in England and France, but in Sicily and Italy, and the XI Century as a whole, the writing of this book will not have been unavailing.

Rua dos Navegantes 30,
Lisbon, Portugal.
1926.

CHAPTER I

William the Conqueror's antecedents—The first Norman Dukes—Origin of the Normans—Their quick assimilation of Latin civilization—Duke Robert—Meeting with Arlette—William's birth 1027—Early life in Normandy—Duke Robert resolves to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land—William receives oath of allegiance from the Norman nobles—Alain V. of Brittany appointed Regent—Duke Robert leaves William with Henri I of France—Old Chronicle account of Duke Robert's journey—Duke Robert's death at Nicæa in 1035.

CHAPTER I

" À Faleize ont li Dus hanté,
Une meschine i ont amée,
Arlot ont nom, de burgeis née."
Maistre Wace, *Roman de Rou.*

William the Conqueror, whose name is one of the greatest epoch-making ones in all history, sprang from a race of bold and valiant warriors.

His father, Robert " le Magnifique "—Robert " le Diable ", his enemies called him—sixth Duke of Normandy, was, but a hundred odd years back, descended from Rolf, or Rollo, the famous Norseman Chief, who wrested by force of arms from Charles the Simple, King of France, and by the treaty of Saint Clair-sur-Epte in 911, legalized possession of a number of towns, together with a large grant of land, which lay to the north and south of the mouth of the river Seine. The name of the land was changed from Neustria to Normandy, and Rollo, embracing Christianity, was baptised in the Cathedral of Rouen, married the King's daughter, the Princess Gisela, and became the founder of the long and famous line of Norman Dukes.[1]

[1] It is generally conceded by modern historians that the chroniclers are in error as to the marriage between Rollo

For many years before this time, the " gens du Nord ", or Northmen, had repeatedly ravaged the northern part of what we now call France. Once in possession of their own land, however, Rollo's followers settled down peacefully, adopted Christianity, turned their boundless energies to rebuilding and strengthening their towns and fortresses, cultivated the soil, and before long, under their Chief's firm and splendid rule, such good order was maintained that it is said, " gold rings could hang from the trees, by the wayside, and not be touched by the passers-by." Gradually too, these hardy adventurers accepted both the language and civilisation of the conquered Franks, until in time there was little else than love of the sea and adventure, mixed with vigorous energy and astuteness on the part of the Normans, to mark the difference between the two races.

After Rollo's death and burial in Rouen Cathedral, where his tomb, as well as that of his son and successor Guillaume Longue-Epée, may still be seen, there came three Dukes, Richard I, sans Peur, Richard II, le Bon, and Richard III, before Robert, William's father, in 1027 succeeded to the fair Duchy.

Duke Robert's name was not altogether

and the Princess Gisela—her tender age at the time making such a marriage impossible. Monsieur A. Albert-Petit, in his " Histoire de Normandie ", affirms that Rollo married Popa, daughter of Count Béranger, King of Lorraine.

unconnected with ugly rumours concerning the sudden death of his elder brother Richard III, which occurred shortly after his accession, but nevertheless he, Robert, proved to be an able, just and energetic ruler, whose capital was a safe and pleasant retreat for many distressed princes of Europe. At his court Henri I found refuge when driven from France by the intrigues of his mother and brother, and it was largely due to the help of Norman arms that the French King succeeded in regaining his throne; it was to Rouen that Ethelred, the Unready, fled when the Danes took possession of England, and his two sons, the Saxon Princes Alfred and Edward, continued to find a home in Normandy, and a protector in Robert, long after their father's death, and their mother's re-marriage to Canute the Danish Usurper. At the Norman capital, too, men of learning were sure of a hearty welcome, and even in the time of Richard le Bon, monks and priests from the far distant lands of Greece, Armenia, and Italy had settled there. They brought with them the greater and more refined civilization of the south, and by mutual dealings with the brethren of their native lands—it is even said, they maintained close intercourse with the cultivated monks of distant Sinai—kept up the standard. All this was of the greatest advantage to the Norman clergy, who were likewise the only teachers of the time,

and had a marked influence on the progress of Norman civilisation, which was so rapid, that although owing its origin so recently to the barbarians of the North, Normandy was soon able to take its place among the foremost states of Europe.

Not bent on conquest, Robert occupied himself so fully with the welfare of his bold and warlike subjects, who loved and feared him, but were troubled that he showed such marked coldness toward women, that there seemed little prospect of his marrying, and ensuring the line of succession.[1] His one great passion was for the chase, his favourite hunting-ground the forest of Hième, which in those days was of vast extent and filled with a great variety of large as well as small game, wolf, bear, wild-boar, deer, fox and hare made their home there and roamed at will; their preservation for the Ducal pleasure ensured by the severe Norman forest laws. "Whosoever should slay hart, or hind, man should blind him," says the old chronicler, and no mercy but short shift was shown a poacher caught in the act in carrying out the sentence, which in many cases was equivalent to one of death. But in spite of the rigid measures taken to protect the royal

[1] Modern historians affirm that Robert was in reality married to Estrith, a sister of Canute, but he did not live with her, and had no children.

game, there were poachers in the forest of Hième, many of the inhabitants of the adjacent villages not only trespassing unlawfully on the Duke's preserve, but deriving a goodly revenue from the sale of skins of animals killed there by stealth. The principal offenders were said to be among the burghers of Falaise. The name Falaise, a corruption of the old German word, Felsen-rock, well describes the little town, picturesquely built on, and under the shadow of, a dominating cliff. It was in that part of Normandy that the old Teutonic speech, customs and Northern reckless independence lingered tenaciously and longest, and therefore it was not surprising that the inhabitants of Falaise were less tractable, and less amenable to the laws of the more modern Norman civilisation of their kinsmen nearer Rouen. To find and make a wholesome and deterrent example of the offenders, Duke Robert set out for Falaise, and although it is not known whether the motives prompting his visit were suspected there, or whether perhaps a guilty conscience prompted unusual enthusiasm, it is recorded that all united in making great preparations for his welcome.

Among the fêtes given in the Duke's honour was a large ball, where "the noblesse" of the neighbourhood vied with those of the little town in showing their Seigneur every mark of courtesy and honour. During the course of the entertain-

ment the Duke's attention was attracted by the ingenuous charms of a young girl, whom, some aver, he had already seen, as he returned from the chase, on the banks of a stream beneath the castle walls, washing linen. "She showed the most exquisite grace in dancing: she was fair, with perfect features, melting blue eyes, expressing both truth and goodness, and colouring fresh and lovely as the bud of the hawthorn tree: more beautiful was she than all others present, and mark well, little enough has yet been said of her charms." Duke Robert became enamoured of her on the spot.[1] On enquiry he learned that she was a maiden of simple birth; the daughter of Fulbert, a tanner of the town, and deemed one of the most culpable among those whom he had come to punish. She was called Arlotte.[2]

Notwithstanding Duke Robert's chagrin on learning of the girl's humble origin, "le trait avoir déjà passé au fond du coeur," and he fell so deeply in love that he forgot for the time being all thoughts of vengeance, and everything else,

[1] There are various accounts given of Duke Robert's first meeting with Arlotte, but this one seems the most poetic.

[2] Her name is variously given as Harlotte, Harlette, Alrez, Arlotta, etc., all corruptions, according to Aug. Thierry, of the ancient Danish one of Herleve: Abbé Prévost writes her name with an H, and says that the English at the time of the Conquest named in derision women of light and unseemly conduct after their Conqueror's mother, hence the derivation of the word harlot.

in his one desire to possess her, to love and cherish " very tenderly ".

It is not known how long Arlotte withstood the Duke's advances, nor whether her father's immunity from punishment was the condition on which she finally surrendered herself to her royal and persistent lover ; but it is chronicled that in so doing she but followed the advice of an uncle, a good man and much revered, who when consulted said, " that all scruple should cede before the good pleasure of the Seigneur," adding, " that the damsel well deserved all good fortune which might come to her."

Cold and indifferent as Duke Robert had hitherto shown himself toward women, he now became an ardent and devoted lover, and his attachment to Arlotte, begun in such a sudden and romantic way, lasted throughout the rest of his life.

In the meantime the chief nobles of Normandy, finding that the Duke could after all occupy himself with affairs of the heart, waited upon him, and voicing the desire of his subjects, urged upon him the necessity of choosing some suitable princess in marriage ; to this the Duke replied that his beloved mistress occupied his whole heart and affection to the exclusion of anyone else, that she was enceinte and that, should a son be born, he hoped the Normans would receive him as his

true heir and successor. The common people were already in a fever of expectancy and excitement over the approaching event, because of a dream which Arlotte was said to have had, the substance of which the Duke, knowing that signs and apparitions had much weight in influencing public sentiment, caused widely to be noised abroad.

In the dream Arlotte saw a tree spring forth from her, so great in size, so straight, so marvellous that it reached to the heavens above ; the shadow thereof was awe inspiring, and covered all Normandy, and the sea, and England beyond the sea. The vision seemed prophetic and the excitement of the Normans knew no bounds when a son was born to Arlotte in the year 1027. Tradition says he was born in the Château of Falaise : historians affirm that the child, in all probability, first saw the light of day in tanner Fulbert's house in the town, below the dominating castle on the cliff. The boy received the name of Guillaume—William.

The magnitude of the child's future was indeed hidden, but from the first it seemed as if the Duke's son was surely destined for unusual greatness. It is related that at the very time of his birth some straw, on which he was placed when born, happening to come beneath his tiny hands, was grasped and held by him, to the great astonish-

ment of all present, the old gossips predicting "that the child would become a mighty man, ready to acquire everything within his reach, and that which he acquired, he would with strong hand steadfastly maintain against all challenges", named him on the spot, "l'Acquéreur."

The vigour which Duke Robert's little son had shown at his birth, developed rapidly: he grew both strong and handsome, and showed so much animation and understanding as to astonish all about him. He lived in the Château at Falaise and was treated in every way by his father as a legitimate son. Among the playfellows of his own age with whom the Duke in a few years surrounded him, William always took the lead; if war were the sport, he was commander; he was the judge when quarrels arose, his decisions even then being remarkable for their justice and sagacity; it was he who issued imperious commands which seemed never to be questioned by his youthful subjects, and in fact in every way he played in miniature the rôle of sovereign.

From the first, Duke Robert destined William as his successor on the throne, and no pains were spared to make his early education, which was in charge of the Duke's brother, Mauger, Archbishop of Rouen, conform to this view: masters, who were either monks or priests, gave him not only his religious instruction, but his early taste for

letters, and he was more carefully taught grammar —Latin of course—logic, geography, arithmetic, astronomy, politics and the various sciences, rudimentary though they were, than most young princes of his time. It is said that when he was but seven years old he could read and explain Caesar's Commentaries. He was most keen about his studies, and always retained throughout his varied career a love and respect for knowledge, saying " an ignorant king is no better than a crowned ass ".

It was then too that the little Duke's knightly training began ; he was taught to ride and to dexterously handle his lance and shield, while doing so ; to follow the chase, a passion for which he inherited from his father and which throughout his whole life remained his favourite pastime, and to enjoy the milder, but not less exciting sport of falconry. He became skilful in the use of bow and arrow and throwing the dart, and was not less quick to learn the games, chess, backgammon and dice, in vogue in those days, than to imitate the deeds of bravery, honour and chivalry, of which the knights of his father's court set him the example.

It was about this time, 1035, that a great wave of intense religious enthusiasm, which later culminated in the Crusades, spread over Europe. It affected all classes, old and young, rich and

poor, lord and vassal alike, and hundreds left for the Holy Land, some led thither by religious fervour alone, others, and among them perhaps many Normans, in whose veins still pulsed the wild and roving Norseman's blood, attracted by the thought of adventure and possible fortune which a pilgrimage to the far distant land of the Holy Sepulchre might bring.

Among those who felt the need of spiritual consolation was Duke Robert, who, although secure on his throne and enjoying the affection and loyal support of his subjects, was at times deeply depressed and moody and the prey of gloomy forebodings arising from some unknown cause. Who knows but that they were the workings of a guilty conscience, if, as conjectured, he had been in any way involved in his brother's mysterious and sudden death, and that the Duke's resolution now taken to consecrate several years of his life in making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem was, he felt, a necessary penance for the good of his soul.

To make up his mind was to act, and firmly resolved in his purpose, Duke Robert summoned the Archbishop of Rouen and the principal Seigneurs of the Duchy together in the Hôtel de Ville and told them of his proposed voyage, "pour expier ses pêchés, si Dieu y daignait consentir."

The nobles were dismayed, and strongly opposed his leaving Normandy, apprehending that his absence could but cause trouble and dissension in the State. But he remained obdurate to their appeals; nothing could turn him from his purpose, and to the peers' final, and to them convincing, argument that he had no legitimate successor to leave them as a ruler, should he die upon the journey—and the Duke had not disguised from them the perils attending his trip nor his wish to assure the succession to William—he replied, "By my faith, I will not leave you without a Seigneur; I have a little bastard who will grow, please God, into an able man, of whom I hope much." In Wace's words:—

> "Il est petit, mais il creistra,
> E se Deu plaist emendera."

"I pray you to receive him as your ruler; it matters little if he is not of wedlock; on account of it he is not worth less in battle, nor at court, nor in the palace, nor yet to render justice unto you."

The Duke then had his little son brought into the Hall where the Norman lords were assembled, and having first embraced him tenderly, presented William to them as his heir and successor, and begged that in case of his own death they would receive him as their ruler.

It would have seemed but natural that among

so many nobles, several of whom were descended from the Ducal house, there should have been resistance shown by some of them to Duke Robert's plans for his bastard son, but perhaps because William's tender age made the fulfilment of their promises seem a long way off, or possibly because the disaffected nobles were carried away in spite of themselves by the enthusiasm of the majority, the Duke's proposition was received with acclamation by the assembly and with one voice the nobles declared that as he was resolved to leave them and would brook no delay in carrying out his pious design, in case of his death their greatest consolation would be to have his son, in whom they could already see traces of his father's virtues, rule over them. Carried by an access of zeal still further, the assembly offered then and there to swear the oath of allegiance to William, and to place their hands between his, as heir-presumptive to the throne.

The oath was taken, and thus, to quote Abbé Prévost, by the will of Heaven, a career of glory and power was opened to William, which the prospective absence of his powerful father might otherwise have easily changed to one of sorrow and disappointment.

Duke Robert confided the reins of government during his absence to his cousin and vassal, Alain V., Duke of Brittany.

The choice of a stranger was perhaps a mistake, but the Duke, surprised himself at the willingness of his subjects in acknowledging his bastard son as their master, thought it best not to put too much power into their hands, lest with it they might find means to change their views and conduct. It was with this same idea in view that Robert resolved to leave William, during his absence in the East, with his over-lord Henri I, King of France, whom he found disposed to take charge of his education, and in the hope of attaching the King more closely to William's interests, the Duke himself took the boy, who was about eight years old, to Paris, there to render homage to his Suzerain, as though he were already in possession of Normandy.

This change of scene, sudden and stirring, unexpectedly interrupted the hitherto care-free routine of life led by young William, a change of scene doubtless less understood in full significance by him than indelibly impressed upon his memory—the nobles' ringing oath of allegiance in the great hall, the journey at his father's side midst the train of following knights with arms aglint to Paris, the brilliant welcome at the French capital, where in the grim old castle on the banks of the Seine William, at his father's bidding, knelt before King Henri, and with his hands in his rendered homage to

him for Normandy, as if the Duchy were already his.

Soon after his return from the French court, amid the universal lamentations of his subjects, Duke Robert, staff in hand, barefooted, wearing a penitential robe of coarse cloth and followed by a large number of pilgrims, left Normandy for the Holy Land. As the Royal Pilgrim passed onward through Burgundy, Savoy and subsequently Italy—for bad weather had forced him to abandon the trip by sea—his fame preceded him, and not only was he received in every country with marks of flattering respect, but his piety and magnificent generosity en route won for him the titles of " le Liberal " or " Magnifique ", names by which he is as well known in history as by his older soubriquet of " le Diable ".

The following account of Robert's journey from one of the oldest chronicles, given by Abbé Prévost in his " Histoire de Guillaume " and also found in rhyme in Wace's " Roman de Rou ", is most quaint. Confused though it certainly is as regards historical sequence, we nevertheless learn from it, among many other interesting details, that although Duke Robert left Normandy in the humble garb of a pilgrim on a penitential journey for the expiation of his sins, he had not entirely divested himself of all worldly pride and possessions, for he entered the city of the Emperor,

Constantinople, at the head of his companions as richly caparisoned as himself, with the éclat and magnificence of a reigning prince, and was received as such by the Emperor.

" Now it happened that they came to a walled town, which was on the way, and the Duke and his people lodged there the night, and arose the next morning. The guards who opened the gates commenced to hurry the pilgrims to pass: and the Duke wished that all his people and his belongings should pass before him. And when they had all passed the Duke barefooted and with staff and bundle came after ; and one of those who guarded the gate raised a cudgel which he held and struck the Duke over the shoulders, so much so that he staggered. And the Normans, when they saw it, wanted to return and quickly would have killed him, when the Duke himself cried out, ' Do not do him any harm ! It is just that pilgrims should suffer for the love of God.' Thus the Duke protected from death him who had struck him, and said to his people ' he loved better the blow which had been given him than his city of Rouen '.

" Thus the Duke passed through Burgundy, Provence and Lombardy, as far as Rome, and received a cross from the Pope [1] who was there.

" Thus as he left to go on his road he saw the

[1] Benedict IX (1033).

statue of the Emperor Constantine,[1] which was of bronze, and mounted on a horse all bronze. And the Duke saw that he had neither gown nor cloak; then he took the most beautiful mantle that he owned and had it wrapped about him. And murmured aside to himself, that the Romans should show more courtesy to their lord to whom they had not been able to give a mantle during the space of a year.

"And thus the Duke left the city where dwelt the Emperor.

"He had a mule, which was led after him, shod with four shoes of gold, and forbade all those who should re-shoe the mule, to replace them with iron.

"It was the law at that time that whoever spoke with the Emperor should take off his mantle and let it fall to the ground. Now the Duke ordered that when any of his people spoke with the Emperor when he had taken off his mantle, he should leave it, and not put it on again; and this was done. Now when the Duke had spoken with the Emperor and he did not lift up his mantle, one of the Emperor's knights sought to give it him, but he said to him that he would never wear it; and thus he told all his people who had taken off their mantles.

[1] Probably Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, who reigned about 325.

"When Duke Robert was about to leave the city, the Emperor proclaimed and forbade any one from taking money for the things which the Duke had had; but nevertheless the Duke paid everything, and with those who did not wish to settle with him he left more than the half of what was their due. Now when the Emperor was told the Duke of Normandy did not wish anything that he did not pay for, he forbade that any should sell wood to his people with which they could cook their food, save through the hand of the Emperor. And when Duke Robert knew it he ordered his people to buy all the walnuts that they could chance upon and find, and then with the shells they cooked their meat; and this was done. When the Emperor saw the liberality and honesty of the Normans, because of it, they pleased him greatly.

"At that time the Emperor and all his people ate from off the ground not having any tables; but because Duke Robert had them made everywhere that he went, the Emperor and his people learned how to make them also.

"Thus the Duke continued on his way in great joy, but very slowly as so great was his illness that he could go neither on foot, nor on horseback. Now he ordered a litter, where he seated himself, and sixteen poor Saracens carried it in

turn, four and four about. And now as they were carrying him thus, the Duke met a pilgrim who came from beyond the sea, and was of Piron in Normandie. The pilgrim saluted the Duke and asked him if he had any messages for his land. 'Thou shalt say,' said the Duke, 'to my people and to my friends that thou hast met me here, where devils were carrying me to Paradise. Thou seest how the heathen, who are devils, carry me to Jerusalem, where God who is in Paradise was born!'

"Then the pilgrim commenced to laugh and took his leave, but not before the Duke had given him largesse.

"When the Duke and his suite arrived at Jerusalem, they found an amazing number of Christians who lay outside the city, and a long time had they been there, for at that time no Christian could live in Jerusalem if he had not paid a besant d'or,[1] and these poor pilgrims had not the where-withall to pay; now they came in hundreds and thousands toward the Duke, weeping and crying for mercy, for they had not the means to enter. Then the Duke ordained that until all the pilgrims had entered, he would not enter. And for each one he gave a besant d'or, or the value thereof, and then he entered in great

[1] A Byzantine coin—worth approximately 10s.—current in Europe from the IX to the XIV centuries.

honour, and gave much to those who guarded the city.

"He also made many handsome offerings to those who guarded the Holy Sepulchre. Now a very noble heathen who was Lord of Jerusalem heard of the honour and liberality of Duke Robert, and he ordered that all the besant d'or and all the offerings he had paid, and presented the day of his entrance to the temple, and to the city, should be returned to the Duke. And when the Duke received them, he caused them to be distributed among the poor pilgrims who were there, so that he retained not a farthing to his profit; and the Duke gave beautiful gifts to the heathen of Jerusalem, and much he dispensed there, and highly was he honoured there.

"And when the Duke had been in Jerusalem as long as it pleased him, he left there, and came as far as Nicæa in Bythnia; and there he drank a poisonous drink, both he and the Count d'Arques, from which they died, and were buried in the Church of Nicæa in the year 1035, where they still are.[1]

[1] William of Malmesbury writes, that toward the latter part of William the Conqueror's life, "honouring the memory of his father in every practicable way," he had Duke Robert's remains removed from the Basilica of Sainte-Marie in Nicæa. Those who had them in charge, on reaching the Province of Apulia, Italy, hearing of the Conqueror's death, re-interred them there, but the name of the place is not given.

"Duke Robert had purchased in Jerusalem many beautiful relics and shrines, which he ordered to be carried to the Abbey of Cerisy which he had founded in Normandie, near Saint Lô, and which relics and shrines one of his chamberlains carried and put there."

On the return of Duke Robert's suite to Normandy, the report of his death, which had previously been noised abroad, was confirmed and the details were given of his last illness, the cause of which was a mystery.

There was a strong suspicion, however, in the Duchy that the "devils", the Saracen litter-bearers, had perhaps outstripped the holy impatience of the Duke, and hastened his entrance into Paradise, by giving him "the poisonous draught" which caused his end.

During his last days, Duke Robert's thoughts had constantly been occupied with plans for his cherished son, and, with the boy-Duke's interests in view, he charged one of the Seigneurs of his suite to convey his last messages to the Norman Etat, his blessing to all his subjects, his eternal farewell, and his dying wish that the Assembly would confirm the right of succession, and ratify the oath of allegiance already sworn in favour of his little son, William the Bastard. "Tout meurt, tout s'en va et tout passe," adds the chronicler, "aussi nous faut-il servir Dieu et l'aimer."

CHAPTER II

Revolt and insurrection in Normandy—The Regent's imprisonment and death—The boy-Duke William returns from Paris to Normandy—Raoul de Vacé appointed Regent of Normandy—William is girded with the arms of a knight—A description of William at the time—William assumes charge of the Government—Honours his father's friends—Old Norman legends—Arlotte's marriage—Guy of Burgundy's treachery—Galet warns William of his danger—William escapes from Valognes—The battle of Val-des-Dunes—Siege of Château Brionne—William meets Dom Lanfranc—Count d'Arque's claims—Siege of Château d'Arques—Incursions of the Angevin prince, Geoffroy-Martel, Count d'Anjou—The retaking of Alençon and Domfront by Duke William—William cruelly avenges his personal affront at Alençon.

CHAPTER II

"In the young Duke's character the old world mingled strangely with the new, the pirate jostled roughly with the statesman."

J. R. Green.

Notwithstanding the firm measures taken by the Regent, Duke Alain of Brittany, for maintaining order, Duke Robert's departure for the Holy Land had been the signal for revolt and insurrection in various parts of Normandy, and now on his death many of the nobles who had any claims to the throne, real or assumed, made the illegitimacy of the young Duke's birth their excuse for trying to overthrow the Government and further their own pretensions to the crown.

All Normandy resounded to the clash of arms; and from 1035 to 1042 it was in a perpetual state of civil war, which the Regent seemed powerless to repress. In fact he was strongly suspected by some of the Normans of having himself designs upon the duchy, and his sudden death after his seizure and imprisonment in 1040 was attributed to poison, a not unusual means employed in those days of getting rid of troublesome rulers.

But the boy-Duke William was not without his zealous adherents, the greater part of the Seigneurs

not stopping to consider their own individual interests but remaining loyal to the oath given to his father, Duke Robert. And it was not long before a deputation of noblemen, headed by Count Raoul de Vacé, was sent by the council of state to Paris, to thank King Henri for his care of the little Duke, who was invited to return forthwith to Normandy, and ascend his father's throne.

The old chroniclers give no account of William's life at the French court, but we know that Henri had fulfilled his obligation to Duke Robert with fidelity and honour, and although he was sorely tempted to use this opportune moment, the child Duke in his hands and Normandy rent by factional fighting, to further his own ends, it is greatly to his credit that he generously put the thought aside, and permitted William to return to Rouen, where he received the allegiance of his faithful subjects. As he was still too young to assume charge of affairs himself, Raoul de Vacé, Connétable of Normandy was appointed Regent. A wise choice, for de Vacé proved not only a loyal and sagacious governor, but a true friend and counsellor to the young Duke in the troublesome years that followed—years full of grave anxiety and danger to William's cause, for not only were several of those nearest and most faithful to him—his tutor, Gilbert Count d'Eu, and the

intendant of his household, Osbern de Crépon—treacherously murdered by his enemies, but his own life, as well as his inheritance, was a score of times in jeopardy. But all the dangers which surrounded William at this time seemed but to hasten his maturity, and to inspire him to deeds of valour and bravery ; his energy and ambition were quickened, and at fifteen, with the heart of a youth and the vigour of a man, burning with impatience to put to a practical test the valuable lessons which he had learned at de Vacé's side in this time of adversity, he was invested with the arms of a knight, some aver by King Henri himself, which gave him " the right to serve and command in all grades ". At that time the ceremony of investiture was not quite the same in Normandy as elsewhere in Europe ; for the Normans, retaining perhaps a remnant of their old pagan customs, made of it more a military than a religious ceremony ; their warriors did not spend the night before the investiture in fasting and prayer before the altar of the Church on which their arms rested, nor did they confess and receive the holy Sacrament before the final ceremony, as was elsewhere the custom. In fact the Normans used to say with scorn, " that he who had been girded with the sword by a priest in a long gown, was not a true knight but a citizen without prowess."

It was indeed a day of rejoicing throughout

Normandy when William received his investiture and to those assembled at the Court of Rouen to see the great pageant: the figure of the young Duke in full and glistening armour, mounted for the first time on a battle horse, and exhibiting his knightly skill at arms, was an inspiring sight. "His stately figure and keen face stood out among all the other young nobles who surrounded him on that day, and the pride of his bearing inspired a respectful fear among his adherents and enemies alike." "The Duke," says an old chronicler, "took the reins, and mounted without the aid of a stirrup; the good horse pawned, pranced, reared himself up, and curveted." "Never," said the Viscount Toaquay, who stood by, "have I seen a man so fairly armed, nor one who rode so gallantly, nor became his hauberk so well, or bore his lance so gracefully. There is no other such Knight under heaven; a fair count he is, and a fair king he will be. Let him fight, and he will overcome; and shame be to him who shall fail him."

Another chronicler pictures William at this time, as "a prince whom heaven had plainly destined for a great career". "He was tall and majestic, and his face of a beauty uncommon to his sex, but withal firm and soldierly. He excelled in all bodily exercises, and possessed a ready and penetrating wit; his character was

noble and fitted for great undertakings, his manner open and gracious. He knew something of all the sciences esteemed at that time, and his facility in learning won the admiration of his masters. Finally amid all his virtues one saw in his youth but the seeds of two vices—a marked tendency to avarice, and a heat in resenting injuries which all the exhortations of his guardian could not modify."

William now assumed charge of the Government himself; and from the very first gave proof of the sound judgment which was to be such a marked characteristic throughout his long and eventful career. He at once commanded all rebels to lay down their arms, promising amnesty for past offences to all those who did so; and he forbade, under pain of severe punishment, further pillage, murder, and lawlessness throughout the Duchy. He eagerly sought and gave heed to the advice of the older nobles, especially Raoul de Vacé and Guillaume FitzOsbern, who from the beginning seemed to have attached themselves to him and to his cause in loyal and whole-hearted service.

Those who had accompanied Duke Robert on his pilgrimage William particularly sought out, and loaded with benefits and honours.

The only one mentioned by name is Auvre Géant, who delighted in adding to the young

Duke's interest in his father, by recounting tales of their adventurous journey to the far East. He told him also many stories of his forbears, the early Norman dukes, stories, or legends rather, full of the superstition of the Middle Ages, but none the less not lacking in examples of bravery and daring. He told him of Richard, " the fearless," who, said to be endowed with the power of seeing as clearly in the dark as in the light, entered a unclosed church during one of his midnight rides to pray and of how he severed the head of the Evil One who menaced him there in the form of a corpse arisen from its bier. Of the same Richard I who encountered in the woods of Moulineaux the spirit of Charles I of France, who, accompanied by the souls of officers who had served under him, was now expiating his sins by ceaseless combats with infidels, and lost souls, in the spirit world. Of how Duke Richard undismayed by the singular sight, although forsaken by his own panic-stricken knights, placed himself on the Magic Carpet, in their midst, and joined, for a night, the royal cavalcade of wraiths ; and so swift was their course through the darkness, that Duke Richard attended Matins, in the early hours of the morning, at the Abbey of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai. He told him too of Duke Richard's strange encounter there with a Norman knight, who was believed to have long since perished in

battle, and of how on his return to Rouen in the morning Duke Richard showed the widow, who was about to re-marry, her husband's ring, and of how later the Duke had the knight brought back to his native land.

To these and many more fantastic tales, the young Duke was ever ready to lend an eager and willing ear, for, after all, the Normans of those days still retained in many ways, when entering the border-land of myth and mystery, the simple credulity of children.

The presence of William's mother "Arlotte" at the court of Rouen was a source of much embarrassment to him, and the title of "Bastard" cast in his face so freely as a term of reproach by jealous Princes of the Blood, but which title he himself used for many years when signing official documents, was still the subject of jest and raillery among the people.

Duke Robert too had not lessened the meanness of Arlotte's birth by making, as aver some chroniclers, her father tanner Fulbert of Falaise, his master of the bed chamber.

One can but wonder whether the old tanner was not more dismayed than pleased at the new duties thrust upon him or whether his stained and work-worn hands took kindly to the task of caring for the things, which with almost an Oriental's love of magnificence, Duke Robert

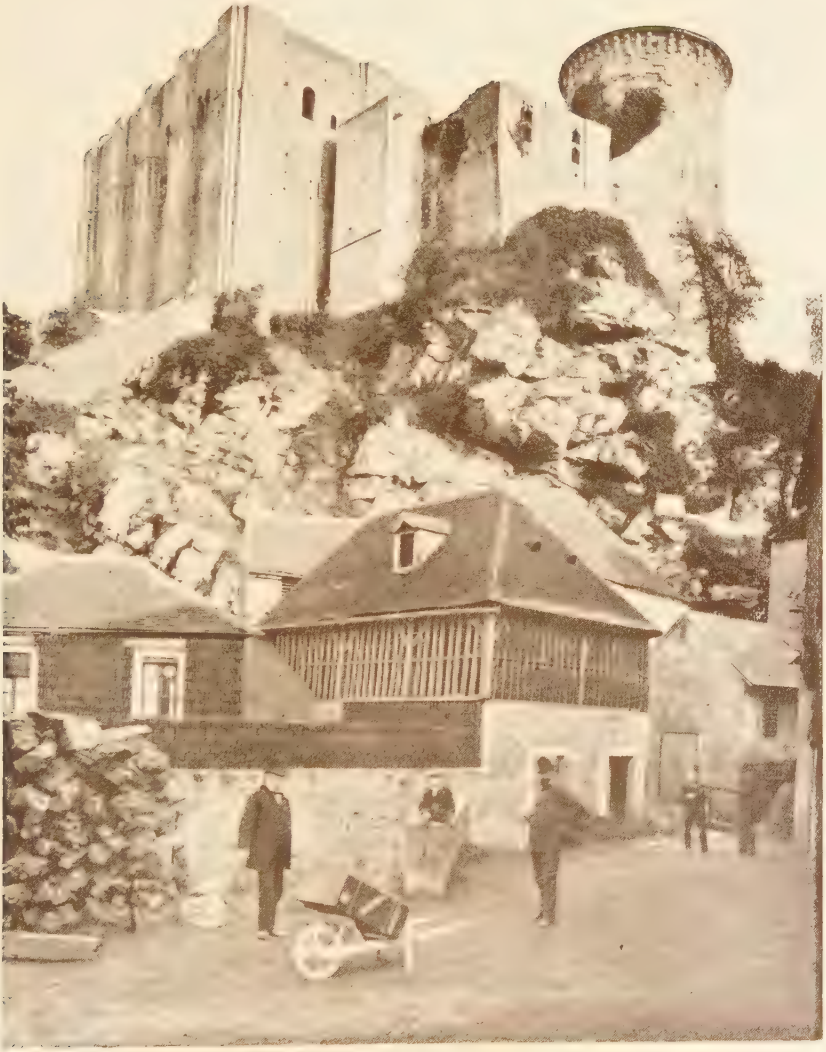
surrounded himself. Or was the tanner perhaps glad when he could return to his old home, his freedom, and the companionship of his old neighbours, Falaisian tanners like himself? We can only wonder, for history does not tell us.

To cover in a degree this confusion, and to give his mother the dignity of wifehood, acting on the advice of Raoul de Vacé, William bestowed Arlotte in marriage on a Norman knight—Herluin de Comteville.

Her children by this marriage were treated by William with every mark of affection and honour, and two of them, Robert, Count of Mortain, and the famous Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, are prominent in history in connection with the conquest of England.

The better to know the loyalty of his subjects, William, on his accession, exacted of them anew homage and the renewal of the oath of fidelity. Among the nobles who refused to render him submission was his cousin, Guy of Burgundy, a Prince who more than any one else should have been closely bound to William by ties of gratitude and affection.

From childhood he had been brought up with the Duke, who had not only knighted him with his own hand, whereby he became "his man", but who had bestowed upon him, against the



Ruins of the château of Falaise, where William the Conqueror was born, 1027

Cl. Archives Photographiques-Paris

[*face p. 34*

counsels of King Henri, the Châteaux of Vernon and Brionne.

The Duke of Burgundy laid claim to the throne through his grandfather Richard II, and just when peace seemed about to revive in Normandy, casting aside all feeling of loyalty to his Suzerain, Guy joined several other discontented nobles, Néel, Governor of Coutance, Ranulfe, Count of Bayeux, and others who were conspiring together against William at Bayeux.

Their plans, which were none other than to murder the young Duke, who was then defenceless at Valogne in the very heart of the disaffected district, and then divide the duchy to suit themselves, were overheard by a poor fool, a court jester named Galet, who had often received William's bounty, and who was attached heart and soul to his interests. Galet played his part in the day's entertainment unsuspected by the conspirators, who "deeming him either stupid, or a fool, had taken no heed to his presence," and then, seizing a cudgel, hastily left Bayeux to warn the Duke, and "he ceased not so to walk day and night that he reached Valogne before midnight".

Admitted to the Duke's presence Galet breathless and exhausted told him his life was in imminent peril, named the conspirators and begged William to fly at once while there was still

time. At first thinking it but some idle phantom of the poor fool's imagination, William refused to leave, but " seeing that the said Galet ceased not to cry, fly ! fly ! or you are a dead man ", at length, thoroughly aroused and alarmed, he sprang from his bed, concealed himself in a cloak, left the house and hastily mounting a horse sped away into the night. Guided by the light of a full moon, William rode hard and fearlessly by unfrequented paths throughout the night, stopping only once, to hide in a hedge, when the sound of galloping horsemen warned him his pursuers were on the road. At dawn he arrived at the village of Rye, where until the middle of the last century a path, " voye-le-duc," was still pointed out as the one the fugitive had taken. The Duke of Normandy was in a sorry state, his exhausted horse could hardly move, much less carry his master, who himself overcome with fatigue, was leading and trying to urge, with the help of a switch, his only weapon, the poor beast forward.

Now by good fortune it chanced that the Seigneur of Rye was just leaving his Château, and William who had lost his way saluted him, and asked of him the road to Falaise.

" Saincte Marie ! " the knight exclaimed. " Monseigneur, what has brought you to this wretched state ? "

"Who are you that recognise me?" replied Duke William.

"By my faith, I am called Hubert de Rye, I hold this village from you, under the Count de Bessin; tell me of your affair without fear, concealing nothing from me, for in truth I will save you as I would myself."

William then told him of his flight, and the danger that still threatened him, and Hubert took the Duke into his house, gave him food and drink, and a new horse, and summoning his three sons, all gallant horsemen, said to them, "Here is your true Seigneur, mount your horses and by the obedience which you owe to him, and to me, I command you to conduct him to Falaise. Take care not to enter any town, nor village, but to follow unfrequented pathways." The young men hurried away with William and arrived safely at Falaise, where all were loyal to the young Duke, and where he was received "with great joy".

The fidelity of the Seigneur de Rye had saved William's life, but the news of his flight and safety was received at Bayeux with cries of rage, and arming their vassals, the conspiring nobles now openly declared war against their young Duke. But far from being dismayed at this new seditious rising which was the most serious which had thus far threatened his throne, involving as it did the

whole region of the Cotentin and the Bessin, William boldly prepared to lead his army in person against the insurgents. He yielded, however, to the more prudent council of his uncle, Mauger, Archbishop of Rouen, and went first to Poissy, to ask King Henri's aid; William recalled to the King his old obligation to his father, Duke Robert, " et lui requit très humblement recours contre Guy de Bourgogne, Néel du Cotentin, Grimoult du Plessis, et autres, qui lui voulaient ravir sa terre et le mettre à mort."

It is true that on several occasions during William's minority Henri had forgotten these obligations, especially in connection with the border Château of Tillière-sur-l'Avre, but he now responded to the young Duke's appeal for help, and taking command himself of a large body of French troops he entered Normandy and joined the Duke's forces, the Normans of the Caux, of Rouen, of the Vexin, of the valley of the Auge, and others, who were likewise faithful to their Prince, at Argences. The rebel troops under the command of Néel du Cotentin to the number of 20,000 were encamped at Val-des-Dunes, a small place a few miles east of Caen, and there a memorable conflict took place. Memorable because it was at Val-des-Dunes that William for the first time proved his mettle in battle: it was there he won his spurs, so to speak, and

it was there he began that career of unrivalled personal success, which lasted until almost the very end of his adventurous life.

The two armies hurled themselves at each other with fury, and their battle cries, the French "Montjoie!", the Norman "Dieu nous aide!" echoed by the invoking of local saints by the rebel leaders, mingled with the clashing of arms. In the midst of the battle Henri I was unhorsed, and barely escaped death at the hands of a mighty warrior Hamon, called "le Dentu"; in vain did the King's followers beg him to be more cautious, for he but threw himself with renewed vigour into the fray, and his standard was seen wherever the battle raged most fiercely. William, on his part, showed prodigious courage, and for many years the Normans loved to relate with pride of their young Duke's valour at Val-des-Dunes, of how the ranks of the enemy broke and gave way as he charged at the head of his cavaliers, and of how he slew with one mighty stroke of his lance Count Bessin's esquire Bardau, considered the bravest warrior of Bayeux. Wace gives the details and tells how William "smote the rebel below the chin, how he drove the sharp steel between the throat and chest, how the body fell beneath the stroke, and the soul passed away."

It was at this battle, too, that "Roman civilisation, as represented by the French, and French

civilisation as exemplified by the Normans of Rouen, and the Eastern part of the Duchy, were allied against the lower and rougher type of refinement of the Scandinavian-Normans of the West." French civilization won, for the rebels were completely routed, and those who did not perish by the sword "struck with terror by God Himself threw themselves in their flight into the river Orne which barred their retreat; and the mills of Barbillon on its banks", we are told in the old chronicle, "were stopped by the dead bodies."

Nothing illustrates the naïveté which was such a marked characteristic of the Norman people of that time better than a story which is told in connection with this battle. A certain Count Raoul de Tesson had always been faithful to the Duke, but carried away by the instances of the Duke of Burgundy and his party, had sworn by the Saints of Bayeux to join the conspirators, and not only to fight against his lord, but to be the first among them to smite William wherever he found him. Tesson headed a troop of his own cavaliers, 140 picked men, "en moult noble arroy," and there was not a knight among them who did not carry his lady's scarf or favour upon his lance. On seeing the Duke's standard approach on the day of the battle, Tesson was stricken with remorse, and felt that he could not fight against

his master. Taking aside a few of his best friends Tesson told them, without shame, of his embarrassment, and they as frankly replied that he should not fail in respect toward his Seigneur, but, at the same time he was bound by honour to hold to the oath sworn to the Duke of Burgundy. One cannot but admire the simplicity and cleverness with which Tesson finally settled the matter to the satisfaction of his own conscience ; leaving his cavaliers aside, he advanced on horseback alone towards the Duke, his lance lowered, but with nothing hostile in his attitude, and on reaching him struck him lightly on the shoulder with one of his gauntlets, saying, " I swore to strike you, and I have fulfilled my promise, now you have nothing more to fear from me: I will serve you as my Seigneur."

" Grand merci, Raoul," replied William, " and now think of doing well, I pray you." From that time on, Tesson fought at the Duke's side, and with the aid of his warriors contributed largely to the defeat of the rebels.

The victory of Val-des-Dunes made William master of the situation in Normandy, established him more firmly on his throne, and changed into fear and admiration the feeling of disdain which part of his subjects had hitherto felt for him. But the subjugation of the enemy was not as yet complete. Guy of Burgundy, who was wounded

at Val-des-Dunes, had made good his escape and was now prepared to still further resist William's authority by fortifying himself in his Château of Brionne, a fortress of such natural strength, built as it was on an island in the river Risle, as to be considered impregnable. The swiftly flowing river was indeed a formidable barrier in those days, but William, although alone with his Normans, King Henri having returned with his troops to France, was undaunted. He raised fortifications on both banks of the stream, and cut off flight as effectively from his enemy as he did the approach of succour or provisions.

The siege lasted several months, and when the rebels finally sued for mercy William was magnanimous. He forgave Guy his treason and disloyalty and although his estates were declared forfeited, and reverted to William, he himself was granted a small pension and permitted to live at the court in Rouen. But the Duke of Burgundy's power and spirit were alike broken, and overcome with shame at his unenviable position in Normandy, he secretly retired to Burgundy, where, according to an old chronicle, " he shortly died of chagrin."

Néel de Coutances, one of the other instigators in the conspiracy of the Cotentin, was exiled and with some of his most zealous partisans left for Italy, where they joined Robert Guiscard, the

principal leader of the band of adventurous Normans who had founded the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

It was during the siege of Brionne that William first met the celebrated Lanfranc, the greatest teacher of the age, and Prior at that time of the near-by Abbey of le Bec-Herlouin. All know the tale of the true beginning of their friendship, a friendship which was to assume such proportions as to have a marked influence on the career of both men ; of how Prior Lanfranc having incurred the Duke's displeasure was ordered to leave Normandy forthwith, and of how William met him by chance, or intention, as he was hobbling along on a lame and sorry-looking nag towards the frontier ; of William's sharp demand why he was not swifter in carrying out his behest, and of Lanfranc's equally spirited answer, that if the Duke would provide him a better horse he would leave more quickly ! William was quick to discern in Lanfranc a master mind, and his subsequent eloquence in pleading his cause successfully won the day. He turned back to le Bec, and from that time on as friend and counsellor his name is indelibly associated with every important undertaking of Duke William.

Another kinsman who caused much trouble in Normandy at this time was William's great-uncle, Count d'Arques, who claimed that through

his father, Richard II, he was the rightful, and, by birth, legitimate inheritor of Duke Robert's throne. As a matter of fact Count d'Arques was not much better off than William in the matter of legalized birth. The son it is true of Richard II, le Bon, but by "la belle Pavie" who, for many years had occupied a lower position at Court, at the Duke's side, than the one which her eventual marriage to him later procured for her.

Count d'Arques lacked both men and means to make good his claim, but that did not prevent his ever being disloyal to the young Duke, and a constant fomentor of trouble in Normandy, "sometimes with the craftiness of a fox, sometimes with the uproar of a lion."

When William summoned him to appear at Rouen and account for his frequent acts of insubordination, Count d'Arques, safely entrenched in his Château near Dieppe, which for several months he had secretly been storing with arms and provisions, refused, saying, "that when he went to Rouen it would be to take possession of the city, which like all Normandy belonged incontestably by right of inheritance to him." This bold message was quickly followed by another, challenging the Duke to combat. William sprang to his feet on hearing it, and for answer instantly mounted his horse, and turning to the

knights about him, cried hotly " qui m'aime, me suivra ! "

Château d'Arques, the ruins of which are now state property and form one of the most interesting relics of mediaeval France, is situated on a high hill, rising abruptly from the plain, and commanding an extensive view of the surrounding country. In addition to its position of natural strength, there were strong walls and towers of Norman make, protected still further by outer walls of an old fort dating from Roman times, and although on a hill-top the Château was surrounded by a moat. There, Count d'Arques prepared to resist the impetuous attack of his young nephew. Impetuous as being instant, but assault was futile, and after many weeks of patient inactivity, for William even then knew how to curb his impetuosity and abide his time if it better served his ends to do so, he starved the garrison of Château d'Arques into surrender. " Safety for life and limb was promised ; and the gates were opened. Knights of renown came forth, with marks of hunger on their faces ; some rode on famished horses, whose feeble feet could hardly raise the dust ; others came forth on foot, booted and spurred, bearing saddles on their backs, seemingly ready for that last symbolic rite of humiliation in which the vanquished offered himself for the victor to mount upon his back."

Count d'Arques himself, disguised as a domestic, made good his escape, and William was counselled by his ever faithful advisor Roger de Beaumont not to seek him, so as to avoid the necessity of punishing a Prince who was after all his uncle, and one of the oldest, if not the most illustrious members of the Ducal House.

The taking of Château d'Arques by William, about 1047, definitely put an end to all attempts on the part of Princes of the Blood to gain possession of the Ducal Coronet, and in the words of Guillaume de Poitiers, from that time on " no baron dared evince a spirit of rebellion against the Duke ".

But William's foes were not only those of his own household, for the next year (1048) he was obliged to take up arms against the powerful and audacious Geoffroy-Martel, Count d'Anjou. The Angevin Prince, taking advantage of the unsettled condition of the duchy, had made serious encroachments on Norman territory, and had seized and garrisoned with his own men the border towns of Domfront and Alençon. The circumstances connected with the retaking of the latter place by William are told in a story famous in every history of the Conqueror; for it was from the walls of the redoubt, which barred William's entrance into Alençon itself, that the Angevin soldiers called on seeing him, in derision

of his grand-father's trade of tanner—" la peau ! la peau ! marchand de peaux ! " beating at the same time upon untanned hides which they had hung upon the walls. Wild with rage at this personal affront, William swore by " la splendour de Dieu ", his favourite oath, that their raillery would cost them dear, and " that if he captured them, he would leave them neither foot, nor hand, nor eye ".

The redoubt was taken, the oath of vengeance fulfilled to the letter, and the hands and feet of those who had made the Duke the subject of a cruel jest were slung by his slingers far inside the walls of the city, whose defenders overcome with horror, and fearing a like fate for themselves, fled precipitately, leaving William in possession of the place. Domfront subsequently surrendered without striking a blow, and the walls in both places were razed to the ground by the Duke's command.

Intermittent fighting, however, still continued for many months between William and Count d'Anjou, victory for the most part favouring the Duke's arms. And it was only after the erection of the strongly fortified Château of Ambrières on the frontier of Maine that William put an end to the depredations of the Angevin Prince on Norman territory.

William has been greatly censured for his

barbarism at Alençon, but his action there was not an exceptionally cruel one for those times. Like punishment was frequently the fate of prisoners of war in the Middle Ages, and as late even as the middle of the 16th century, torture and mutilation of various parts of the body, too terrible to relate, were suffered not only by those engaged in warfare, but were recognized means of punishment countenanced by law in the civil courts of nearly every country in Europe.

Duke William as a rule was more lenient in his treatment of prisoners, more inclined to sentences of exile, loss of property or position, than other princes of his time. At Alençon his act of retribution was certainly terrible, but at the same time distinctly and purely mediaeval, and not to be judged by more modern standards.

CHAPTER III

The Norman Etat urge upon William an alliance by marriage with some reigning European house—William's choice, Mathilde of Flanders—Mathilde's illustrious descent and connections, beauty and charm—Count Baudouin and his daughter receive William's overtures with coldness—William's bold method of wooing—William and Mathilde's betrothal and marriage—Their marriage declared illegal by Mauger, Archbishop of Rouen—William and Mathilde excommunicated—Normandy placed under an interdict—Dom Lanfranc conducts negotiations successfully in Rome—Pope Nicholas II grants the Ducal pair a dispensation, and the marriage is confirmed—A penance imposed upon the young couple—The "Abbaye aux Hommes" founded by William, the "Abbaye aux Dames" by Mathilde at Caen—Archbishop Mauger tried and deposed—Retires to Guernsey—His death as related by an old chronicler—France jealous of Normandy's growing power and independence—Henri I invades Normandy—Annihilation of one division of the enemy at Mortemer—William sends news of the defeat to Henri at Mantes—Treaty between Henri and William—Broken later by Henri—He invades Normandy—Henri's army surprised by William's at Dives—A new treaty of peace concluded between the French and Normans—Henri's death—His son Philippe I, eight years old, succeeds him—William's father-in-law, Count Baudouin of Flanders, appointed Regent of France.

CHAPTER III

" Mathilde, la fille de Baudouin-le-Pieux et d'Adèle de France, ayant mené jusqu'à l'epoque de son mariage une vie obscure et cachée, bien que la très gracieuse dame eût été élevée par sa sage mère, de manière à faire fructifier en elle tout ce qu'elle tenait de son père."

Guillaume de Poitiers.

Up to this time, arms had occupied William's attention more than politics, the keeping of his warriors in training ready for any emergency more than the furtherance of his own political strength. But it was now urged upon the Duke, by the Norman Etat, that to still further increase his power and glory, he should form an alliance by marriage with one of the reigning houses of Europe.

The proposition coincided with William's own desire, for his choice had for some time been fixed upon the Princess Mathilde, daughter of Baudouin V, le Pieux, the reigning and powerful Duke of Flanders, as sharer of his throne and state.

The Alliance for Normandy would indeed be a brilliant one, for not only was Count Baudouni the head of one of the greatest states of Europe, " a Knight of the Roman Empire, whose counsels

were respected in times of pressing necessity, and a chief whose importance was feared and honoured by Kings", but there were few Princesses of that time endowed with more beauty and personal charm, more highly educated, or who could boast of more illustrious descent or connections than Mathilde of Flanders.

The blood of both Alfred and Charlemagne flowed in her veins; Henri I of France was her uncle, and by successive inter-marriages the Flemish house was closely connected with those of Italy, Burgundy and Wessex. But unfortunately William's overtures were received at first, indeed for some time, with great coldness by Count Baudouin, and with positive resistance on the part of his daughter, the Princess, it was said, having declared "she would never marry a bastard!"

A man of less determination than William would have perhaps given up as hopeless the idea of an alliance with his powerful Flemish neighbour; and there were not lacking other rulers who would have gladly bestowed a daughter upon the young Norman Duke, whose increasing and brilliant success was even then the subject of men's wonder. But William was resolved to wed Mathilde, whom some chroniclers aver he had once seen in Paris when she accompanied her father on a visit to the French court and no

other, and having hitherto overcome every obstacle that barred his path to success, he was now equally determined to surmount the difficulties in the way of this marriage. He was discouraged by neither the evident reluctance of Count Baudouin to entertain his proposals, nor the repugnance of his daughter to marry a Bastard Duke, and although the method he chose for his wooing, if we may believe the "Chronique de Tours", was both novel and vigorous, and not seemingly calculated to win the affection of a reluctant maiden, it was successful. Going secretly to Bruges, where the Princess resided with her father, William waited one morning outside the church where she was attending mass, and as Mathilde emerged from the door, William "seized her, rolled her in the mud, overwhelmed her with blows, *lui jeta des pierres*, and then quickly remounting his horse, rode rapidly away".

Mathilde was taken home after this strange declaration of love, and "ill, and suffering though she was from the blows which she had received, she declared to her father that she would never have any other as husband than William of Normandy".

A bold and forceful lover has ever appealed strongly to the weaker sex, and perhaps Mathilde's feminine intuition was quick to discern, beneath the strange effrontery of her suitor, the master-

mind and strong personality of the young Norman Duke who was destined to carry everything before him, and indelibly impress his name upon the world's history for all time.

It is chronicled that Mathilde "loved him dearly to the very day of her death", and it is a matter of history that their married life was a singularly happy one. William was ever a tender and devoted husband, and throughout twenty-seven odd years their wedlock was an example of absolute domestic fidelity, unique among the princes of his time, a time too, when marital indiscretions of the ruling class were looked upon with a most indulgent eye.

The negotiations once arranged, Count Baudouin, attended by a brilliant suite and bringing innumerable presents, personally escorted his daughter across the frontier to Château d'Eu, where William surrounded by a train of his most splendid cavaliers "jaloux de temoigner sa gloire en même temps que sa passion", awaited his bride. And there, at Château d'Eu, in 1053, their marriage was celebrated with more pomp and magnificence than had ever before been seen in Normandy. It is a pity that there seems to be no account given of Mathilde's bridal dress, not strange, however, as all the chroniclers of that time were either monks, or priests, but her wedding mantle, adorned with jewels, and the

not less magnificent one worn by her royal consort on their wedding day, together with his helmet were, as late as the latter part of the XV century, preserved in the treasury of Bayeux Cathedral.

Soon after the marriage ceremony, William conducted his bride to Rouen, where she was received with the greatest enthusiasm by her new subjects, and " where ", says Wace, " she was greatly served and honoured."

" For an entire fortnight " the city was given up to fêtes and pageantry, with tournaments of great magnificence and all sorts of " galanteries ". But the rejoicings were abruptly interrupted by the issuing of an edict by William's uncle, Mauger, Archbishop of Rouen, who, irritated by his nephew's growing power and independence, and actuated less by ecclesiastical zeal than a feeling of personal revenge—William having, it is said, warned him that if he did not speedily mend his dissolute ways of living he would find means of making him do so—excommunicated the young couple, declaring that they were too closely allied by blood, both having a common ancestor in Duke Rollo, for the marriage to be legal in the eyes of the Church. (The different chroniclers are confused and at variance as regards the question of this marriage prohibition ; some aver that William and Mathilde's union had before its

consummation been forbidden by Pope Stephen IX, on the ground of consanguinity within the prescribed seventh degree; but one or two historians put faith in the statement that the marriage was forbidden because Mathilde had been, and at that time was not legally free, or was a married woman. Her very youth, for she was still in her early teens, would be against it, and again it does not seem probable that William, who was deeply religious and ever a strict upholder of the laws of Holy Church, would have married Mathilde in defiance of the Pope's bann.)

From all accounts Archbishop Mauger must have become a most unworthy character, "insensé," says Guillaume de Jumiège, with no respect for his Holy office, intriguing, unscrupulous and licentious. He enjoyed large revenues from his ecclesiastical benefices, but had sunk so low that it is related that he had even sold sacred vessels of the Church for additional means for his life of pleasure. It was thought, too, by the common people, that Mauger dealt in charms and magic, and that he had a private devil named "Touret" whose evil bidding he was wont to follow. Nevertheless, by the order of this ungodly man, all Normandy was now laid under an interdict, and nothing more miserable or lamentable

could be imagined in a land where the Church was the centre and power of everything uplifting and good. Divine service was denied the people ; the Crucifixes from the altars were overthrown in the dust ; the doors of the churches were closed, barred, and faggots and brambles piled up against them ; baptism of infants, and the confession, and last offices of the dead were alone allowed the unhappy people.

William and his bride were overcome with confusion and unhappiness, and although it is true that the Duke had neglected to obtain canonical dispensation for the marriage, that was surely more the fault of his clergy than of his own. The ancestor in common, too, was so distant that it seems most likely that neither William nor his clergy had given the matter serious thought. And for the new Duchess, devout and fervent, a stranger still in a strange land, it was hard to be thus deprived of her religion, accustomed as she was from infancy to the splendid ecclesiastical ceremonials which added so much lustre and éclat to the court she had so lately left.

William and Mathilde tried at first to assuage the wrath of the revengeful Archbishop by founding " an annual endowment for the maintenance of a hundred poor at Rouen, as well as at Caen, Bayeux, and Cherbourg ". This being of

no avail, they turned to the Holy See and appealed to Nicholas II to relieve them from their embarrassment.

Lanfranc, the able and eloquent Italian, the Prior of Bex, whom we remember that William first met during the siege of Château Brionne, was chosen by the Duke to go to Rome on this important mission. And so ably did Lanfranc conduct the negotiations that a dispensation was granted, and the marriage, now of several years standing, finally confirmed by the Holy Father. At the same time a penance was imposed on the young couple, which was, " that the husband and wife should each build and endow an Abbey, one for Monks, the other for Nuns, to the end that God should be served by one and the other sex, and would pardon their misdeed."

It is to the faithful carrying out of the Pope's behest that we owe the two beautiful specimens of Norman architecture, the work of Normans hands and brain, which were, and still are, the glory and pride of Caen, " the City of Churches."

The " Abbaye aux Dames ", Duchess Mathilde's work of expiation, was the first to be begun, and the construction proceeded so rapidly that the Abbey Church, La Trinité, was so far completed as to be consecrated several weeks before Duke William set out to conquer England.

The church, which is in the form of a Latin

La Trinité, the Church of the Abbaye-aux Dames, founded by Duchess Mathilde at the same time, 1062, and likewise as an act of penance, as her husband Duke William founded St. Etienne. The Hôtel-Dieu of Caen now occupies the Conventual buildings

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Cross, impresses one at once as being in perfect harmony with the other conventual buildings which it dominates. Its lines are dignified, and in fine proportion ; two square towers flank the main portal, a third, a pointed one, rising from above the transept. Purity of line and delicacy of workmanship are characteristic of the interior, while much of the fantastic decoration of the capitals show plainly the influence of the East, with which many Normans of that time were familiar. The convent was placed by its founder in charge of Benedictine Nuns, and it was destined by Mathilde to be a refuge and place of religious retreat for women of the Norman nobility. As the years went by, France and England, as well as Normandy, were represented among its illustrious religieuses. Cécile, the eldest daughter of the Ducal pair, was the second Abbess, the first a Mathilde coming from the Abbey of Préaux ; and later a daughter of Henry III, also Mathilde by name, and Adèle, a daughter of Edward I of England, held in turn the same high office.

All through the Middle Ages the Abbesses of the Convent, which in strength was like unto a fortress, wielded great power, and on one day of the year had the privilege, which was jealously guarded, of naming the " countersign " for the garrison of Caen. From the first the Abbey was richly endowed by its benefactress with " Biens "

in different parts of Normandy, and later, as new honours and power came to the Ducal pair, large domains in England added greatly to its wealth and importance. Built on elevated ground, in the midst of a beautiful park and commanding a picturesque and extensive view of the city, the "Abbaye aux Dames" we see to-day, thanks to the admirable work of restoration undertaken about fifty years ago, looks very much as it must have done when at the height of its power and glory. The abbatial buildings now house the Hôtel Dieu of Caen, and the continual work of mercy among the sick and suffering is surely a most fitting and lasting memorial to the good and noble Duchess.

The "Abbaye aux Hommes", Duke William's work of penance, was slower in the building than that of his Duchess, and the Minster, St. Etienne, was not ready for consecration until 1077, ten years later than that of La Trinité. The church, which is the largest religious monument in Caen, and in fact one of the largest in all France, surpassing in length Notre Dame and the Cathedral of Bayeux, is cruciform, and the general design resembles that of La Trinité. But, as is most fitting, it was planned on a larger and far grander scale, and is distinguished by an absolute and severe simplicity; the very boldness of its unornamentation exemplifying as it

were in stone the dignity and austerity of its founder.

In the meantime, while taking the initial steps towards the fulfilment of his religious obligations, Duke William did not forget to punish the immediate author of his unhappiness. By his orders a council of Norman Bishops was convened, and after carefully examining the old charges against Archbishop Mauger, who apart from his evil mode of living was said to have been involved in the intrigues of his brother, Count d'Aignes, against the Duke, deposed him, and his See was given to Maurille, a Monk from the Abbey of Fécamp.

Mauger retired to the island of Guernsey, which at that time belonged to Normandy, and surrounding himself as far as possible with everything which could minister to his luxurious tastes, continued to live there a life of pleasure for many years.

An account, from a very old chronicle, of Mauger's sudden and accidental death, which neither his "magic" nor "Touret" seems to have been able to prevent, is quaint and typical.

"Now Mauger was at one time on a ship near Bassault in the Contêntin. And he said to the master of the ship 'put about or some of us will be drowned . . . Land.' But the sailor did not hear, nor heed, and sailed ever onward, until

they had almost reached their destination. Now, Mauger had his cuissarts or armour thigh guards on his knees, and he was not otherwise shod, for it was too warm. Now as Mauger was in the act of drawing on his cuissarts to disembark, the ship lurched, and hindered by his cuissarts, Mauger could not steady himself, and was thrown into the sea, and was drowned, and no man could help him. Nevertheless his body was found between two rocks, his cuissarts between his feet, and taken from the water it was carried to Cherbourg, where it was buried."

There were now few sovereigns of Europe whose names were more brilliant, or inspired more fear and jealousy, than William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy. But he was not long to enjoy the pleasures of a peaceful reign.

France saw with uneasiness the ever-increasing power and independence of her vassal, and King Henri, who had rendered William in many ways the services of a father, now sought a pretext for declaring war against him, and of annexing, if possible, the Norman Duchy, to the " Royaume des lis ". No better excuse could be found than that of the recent violence of the Normans against the Angevins at Alençon ; the Angevin chief, Geoffroy-Martel, Count d'Anjou, being a vassal of France. And Count d'Anjou still keenly resenting the loss of Domfront and Alençon was not

slow in urging the French King to avenge his wrongs. Other Seigneurs too, envious of the position which Normandy had already attained under William, showed unusual eagerness in espousing the King's cause; the Princes of Brittany, of Burgundy and Acquitaine, of Champagne, of Chartres, in fact almost all the vassals of France, uniting in a common hatred against Duke William, hastened with their followers armed to the teeth, to serve under the royal banner. They assembled at Mantes and there swore an oath to Henri to right his wrongs, and to fight together with him to destroy Normandy as an independent Duchy.

These preparations, and the approach of such a formidable army to invade their territory, caused consternation among the Normans. "One can affirm," write Guillaume de Poitiers, "that Julius Caesar, or any other more skilful in war—if he ever had existed—had he been the chief of a Roman army gathered from a thousand nations, would have been frightened at the terrible aspect of that host; the peasants in their thatched cottages, the priests in their churches, the lords in their manoirs, trembled with uneasiness and terror."

Duke William alone among them was undismayed, although at the same time regretting, as a vassal of France, the necessity of taking up

arms against his over-lord. But there was no time for delay, or useless repining, and there seemed no demand on which a peace basis might be reached. William determined, however, to avoid if possible personally meeting his feudal lord in battle. His plan was to stand strictly on the defensive ; his first move to strip the country, through which Henri and his army must pass, of all provisions. The cattle from the fields were carefully hidden in the woods, and the peasants sent to tend them there. French foraging parties, their footsteps dogged by the Duke's men, met short shrift at Norman hands, and unable to find sufficient food to maintain his entire force, Henri stopped at Mantes, conveniently near the frontier, sending a division of his army, commanded by his brother, Count Eudes, to Mortemer, a little town near Neufchâtel, from which centre Count Eudes intended ravaging the rich country of the Caux. "And there at Mortemer the French finally found a fertile country, and abundance of butter and wheat, and forage for their horses ; and they stopped there in that place the night. There they made a great feast, and without doubt they fell asleep there, believing that the Normans were at Evreux with their Duke William."

But William had also divided his army into two corps, he himself commanding the best

troops who were destined if necessary to encounter the King ; and fully informed by his spies of the enemy's movements, on learning that part of the French forces were at Mortemer, he dispatched the second division under Count d'Eu in all haste to surprise them there.

The Normans reached the town at daybreak, and precipitated themselves without warning upon their unsuspecting and unwary foe. The French, deep in sleep after a night of revelry, were first aroused by the burning of the houses in which they were quartered, and the war cries, " Dieu aide " and " notre Dame ", of the Normans in their very midst. " The confusion was frightful. Men had to arm themselves in the midst of the flames, and with the army pressing round them ; one man would fain mount his horse, but he could not find his bridle, another still less lucky could not find the entrance of the house in which he was lodged ; those who strove to cut their way out of the burning town found the head of each street guarded by Norman soldiers." The French, although taken at a disadvantage, and fighting against heavy odds, resisted bravely, and the din of battle rose above the crackling of the flames of the burning town from early dawn until the third hour after mid-day. But in the end their rout was complete, and the flight of those who escaped death or capture at Norman hands,

was only measured by the swiftness of their horses; of the forty thousand troops, but ten thousand remained alive.

The news of the annihilation of the French, and of the immense amount of booty taken from the enemy, was conveyed at once to William waiting impatiently at Evreux.

On hearing the good tidings, and with the intention of spreading terror in Henri's camp, the Duke on his part at once dispatched a courier to Mantes, to tell of the disaster.

The knight chosen for the task was of noble birth, one Raoul de Ternois, a grandson of the famous Norman Roger du Ternois, who had fought valiantly against the Saracens in Spain, and who had later during William's childhood caused much trouble in Normandy. This messenger, climbing a tree, or some say a lofty hill, near the French camp in the middle of the night, cried aloud with a ringing voice. "Frenchmen, awake! you sleep too long; go bury your friends who lie dead at Mortemer!"

In the words of Wace:—

"En un arbre le fist munter,
E tute nuit en haut crier;
Françeiz, Françeiz, levez, levez,
Alez vos amis enterrer,
Ki sunt oçciz à Mortemer,
Le Reis oi ki cil cria,
Merveilla sei mult s'esmaia."

His voice, coming as it were from space, broke upon the stillness of the night, startling the sentinels at their posts, who demanded who he was and why he shouted abroad at such an unseemly hour. "I am called Raoul de Ternois," he replied, "and I bring you woeful tidings. Take your carts and chariots to Mortemer and carry away the bodies of your comrades; for the French came against us in order to prove Norman chivalry, and they found it much stronger than they might have wished. Eudes, their leader, has been forced to escape shamefully; Gui, Count de Ponthieu, is captive. The others are prisoners, or dead, or have been at pains to save themselves by rapid flight. Announce this news at once to the King of the French on the part of the Duke of Normandy." "A touch of pleasantry, however rough, runs through most Norman sayings and doings," writes Freeman, "and it certainly needed a ready wit to send Raoul du Ternois, or any other man, to the top of a tree, or rock, to announce at the dead of night that the French had been cut to pieces."

After such an overwhelming disaster, King Henri was in no mood to continue the war, and without further striking a blow returned forthwith to France. Upon the return of the French prisoners taken at Mantes, their horses, accoutrements, etc., remaining Norman spoil, and the

payment of their keep—which was fixed at "ten besants a day for the counts, six for the barons, four for the knights, and one for the esquires", while in Norman hands—King Henri concluded a treaty of peace with the Duke of Normandy (1056), the king promising to restore the Château of Tillière which he had seized during William's minority, furthermore binding himself to leave William a free hand in his quarrel with Count d'Anjou, a quarrel which was not settled during the Count's lifetime, nor indeed until William united the interests of the two Duchies by marrying his eldest son Robert to the young Count's sister Marguerite.

Some three years later, in 1059, King Henri, burning with desire to avenge the massacre at Mortemer, unfaithful to his compact with William, joined Count d'Anjou, who, together with the Counts of Maine and Poitou, had again entered Norman territory with their troops, burning and pillaging in the usual fashion. Henri advanced as far as St. Pierre-sur-Dives without serious opposition on the part of William, who but watched and waited, skirmishing parties alone harassing and hindering the French line of march—patiently abiding his time for the most favourable moment of attack. At St. Pierre-sur-Dives the King lodged in the great Abbey, the minster of which is still standing, his troops occupying the town.

After ravaging the fertile plain about Caen the French troops skirted the left bank of the river Dives until they reached the small village of Varaville, where there was a favourable crossing leading to the rich lands further East, and on to Rouen, their objective point. From the heights above the river William watched and followed the enemies' progress and at the decisive moment for an attack fell suddenly upon Henri's rear-guard, which was about to cross the river Dives. The disorganized troops strove vainly to rejoin their comrades ; but panic stricken and confused, precipitated themselves in such numbers upon the Varaville bridge that it gave way beneath them, and the swiftly rising tide, for it was near the river's mouth, swept away and drowned the greater part of those who did not perish at Norman hands. King Henri, meanwhile, with his advance-guard had already gained the opposite bank in safety, and from the " butte " de Basbourg could but look on in grim and tragic silence at the utter annihilation of a large part of his army, and the loss of his baggage train laden with Norman plunder, powerless to strike a blow in its defence. " Thus he who had thought to avenge his shame," writes Orderic Vital, " but doubly increased it."

The victory at Varaville in 1059 put an end to hostilities between France and Normandy, and a new treaty of peace was concluded between

the two countries, which was faithfully kept on both sides for many years.

But King Henri did not long survive his defeat, and following a custom in vogue in France in those days to prevent trouble with the succession, on feeling his end approaching, had his eldest son Philippe, whose mother, a " Russian princess," was Henri's second wife, crowned King of France. The ceremony, which was one of great magnificence, took place in the cathedral at Rheims, Duke William, " en grand et noble arroi," being present.

In 1060 Henri died, and Count Baudouin of Flanders, William's father-in-law, was chosen Regent of France. For the little King, Philippe I, was but eight years old at the time of his father's death.

There was now a strong bond of both interest and affection uniting the rulers of these two powerful states, and the friendly relations already existing increased and continued for many years to be a source of mutual advantage to France, and her most powerful vassal, Normandy.

CHAPTER IV

Foreign rulers recognizing William's ability and growing power seek to ally themselves with him—Arrogant Norman barons forced to submit to William's authority—William's wise ordinances for maintaining order and peace—The "Truce of God"—The "Loi du couvre feu"—Commerce revives and flourishes in Normandy—Ecclesiastical architecture a marked feature of Norman civilization—William and Mathilde set an example in religious fervour—Guillaume de Jumiège gives a list of abbeys and churches founded or restored at this time—The Abbey of Jumiège—The Abbey of Le Bec-Hellouin—Orderic Vital and Ouche—Mathilde's visit to Ouche—Her gifts to the abbey—William and Mathilde's generous gifts to Cluny—Orderic Vital's description of Rouen—The ancient Tour de Rouen—William and Mathilde's children—Their characteristics and history—Mathilde—William.

CHAPTER IV

"The eleventh century is generally considered with disdain, as a time of barbarism, and oppression . . . It only occupies itself in our histories with conquests of the kingdoms of Naples, and England, by Normans, the war of investiture and the first crusade. . . . Nevertheless it is a great century. . . . It is a period of life, and of creation, and all that was noble, heroic, and vigorous in the middle ages commenced at that epoch."

J. C. L. Simonde de Sismondi.

Normandy, for the first time in many years, enjoyed a period of prolonged tranquility, for the neighbouring rulers, recognising in William the qualities of greatness which later made him the most famous sovereign of his time, were each anxious, not only for peace, but to form an alliance with him. The relations with France, as we have seen, were on a peace basis, and largely owing to the help of Norman arms Languedoc and Gascony had been forced to submit to French sovereignty; Brittany was William's ally; Maine subdued; Flanders bound by mutual interests. Other rulers, too, sought through the medium of gifts to attach William more closely to their side, and it is chronicled that those in power in Gascony and in Auvergne sent presents of thoroughbred horses, for which William was known to have a

strong penchant, to ensure his favour ; even the kings of far away Spain sending similar gifts and " others ", from a like motive.

William's sovereignty at home was feared and obeyed, and civil strife of a serious nature had long since ceased within his borders. For in looking over the troubles which harassed his reign in the beginning and even now forced him to be ever alert and watchful, William clearly saw that the chief cause lay in the excessive strength of his nobles. Scattered and divided power, opposed as it is necessarily to central, supreme and stable government, was a source of menace to all the states of Europe at that time, and France, whose influence and interests were so strongly felt in Normandy, was less exempt than ever from this evil, since the decline in power of the Carlovingian, or " Sluggard Kings ". William of Normandy was the first sovereign of his time to attack the danger at its base in a practical way and to the end that the strength and pride of his arrogant and independent Seigneurs should be lessened, that the means by which a rebellious spirit might be fostered, William ordered that all fortified châteaux, not immediately under his rule or which had been built without his leave, should be raised to the ground within a given space of time fixed by him. The benefit to Normandy

from the carrying out of this severe measure was incalculable for the barons, who formerly, from the security of their strongholds like Château d'Arques, and Château Brionne, had ravaged the lands of their inferiors, and fought among themselves, when not occupied with warring against their Seigneur, settled down to a more tranquil life, realizing that they must bend to the will of a ruler who understood how to make himself obeyed. Once free from the turmoil of foreign and internal warfare and strife, William turned his activity and marked executive ability to the development of his dukedom and to the further framing and enforcement of laws which would add to the safety and prosperity of his subjects. From a feeling of necessity, however, knowing well the characteristics of those whom he had to govern, less perhaps than from one of inclination, he continued to pursue for some time a policy of great severity. "The Normans," he said, "when governed by a firm hand are capable of the greatest undertakings. They are brave, invincible and qualified to hold their own against any enemy; but if not kept in subjection they fight among themselves to their own destruction. They are naturally seditious and because of it capable of going to the greatest extremes. I speak from experience."

There were indeed strong measures and a strong

ruler needed to bring order out of chaos after so many years of factional fighting, violences, pillage and incendiarism. Not that these disorders were confined alone to Normandy, for they were felt, in a greater or lesser degree, throughout the Christian world at that time. In France the Church had striven to check this endless internal strife of man against man, Christian against Christian, and had promulgated the famous " Truce of God ", which owed its inception to St. Odilo, an abbot at the time, about 1035, of Cluny, who received, it is said, a vision from heaven ordering him to preach peace to the world. The " Truce of God " was published by William at a meeting of the Norman Etat in Caen. It read as follows " From Wednesday, at the setting of the sun, until sunrise on Monday, peace shall be maintained among my people, and no one shall act against another either in word or deed. And whosoever does the contrary shall pay a fine to the Prince according to the case ; and he shall be excommunicated until he has paid ten livres at the will of the Bishop." This law, the terms of which necessarily did not apply to expeditions of conquest, or to a foreign foe, was sworn to by both laymen and clergy, and so faithfully did the latter insist upon its enforcement that even the " right of Sanctuary ", or refuge within the sacred

walls of a church, was denied those who had violated it; the feuds of the Middle Ages were gradually abolished and never before had the influence of the Church been so dominant a factor in maintaining public peace and order.

Another wise law, among the many enacted by William at this time, is one indelibly associated with his name, the famous "loi du couvre feu", or curfew bell. "Each evening a bell shall be rung in every parish to admonish all to pray to God, to shut their houses, put out fires and light, and cease to run the streets." By this wise ordinance, which was scrupulously observed in Normandy for a long time after William's death, and which was carried across the sea and enforced in the conquered land, the danger of conflagrations, which at that time of almost universally timber-built houses were of frequent occurrence, was greatly lessened, brawlers, conspirators and evil-doers could no longer haunt the streets and by-paths by night and count upon the friendly cover of the darkness to hide their misdeeds.

Order gradually but surely sprang from confusion as men forsook their restless ways and settled down to more peaceful occupations than had hitherto been possible; commerce revived and flourished as never before; artisans seeking new fields for their activity came from

neighbouring Flanders, already famed as a land of industries, to ply their trades; ships of the sea discharged their cargoes at the very gates of the Norman capital, much in the same busy fashion perhaps as the boats do at the quays of the Rouen of to-day; the "pommes d'or", or oranges, together with silks, spices and other delightful things from the Normans in the south, from Calabria and Sicily, colonies under the sway of the Normans, soon ceased to excite wonder in this northern land: Normandy advanced steadily and rapidly towards the zenith of its prosperity and power.

Architecture was a marked feature of Norman civilization, and as riches and prosperity came to the land, the nobles used their wealth freely and generously in building convents and churches, "rich men's houses for poor men," as someone has aptly put it, or in restoring and endowing those already existing.

"At that time," says one of the most ancient chroniclers, "Normandy had great peace, and Holy Church also, and many nobles built abbeys and gave great possessions to the monks and nuns who served God." The Duke, himself, set an example in this religious fervour, and besides building St. Etienne, the church of the abbey of "penance" at Caen, he completed St. Cerisy, founded by his father near St. Lô, and to which it

will be remembered Duke Robert sent shrines and relics from the Holy Land.

Duchess Mathilde was not less zealous than her husband in her good works, and watched and urged with impatient solicitation the building of her expiatory task, La Trinité, the church of the " Abbaye aux Dames ", at Caen.

Guillaume de Jumiège devotes two chapters in his " Histoire des Ducs de Normandie " to the forty odd abbeys and churches founded or restored at this period of emulative religious zeal, many of them claiming our special interest as they still stand, at least in part, and are in use now as in those days of old. Others, and they are to be found all over Normandy, are memorable ruins, their names interwoven familiarly with the history of the duchy from the dim centuries of the past to the present time. Lasceline, Countess D'Eu, with the aid of her two sons, Robert, Count d'Eu and Hughes, Bishop of Lisieux, founded an abbey at St. Pierre-sur-Dives, the present day abbey-church, part Romance, part Gothic, still retaining much of its ancient Norman structure. Robert, Count of Mortain, William's half brother, built the monastery of Grestain, now in ruins, near Honfleur ; and there, " Arlotte," the mother of them both, was subsequently buried. Guillaume Count Talvas built a monastery near his château at

Domfront, and the tomb of its founder may still be seen in the little eleventh-century church of Notre Dame-sur-l'Eau. Richard, Count d'Evreux, founded the abbey of St. Taurin, large portions of the original abbey-church being incorporated in the lovely building in use to-day : Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, later Duke of Hereford, built two monasteries, one at Lire, one at Cormeilles ; Roger de Beaumont built on his estates at Préaux two convents, one for monks, the other for nuns ; Raoul du Ternois, of Val-des-Dunes fame, built the monastery of St. Pierre-de-Chatillon ; Roger de Montgommeri founded three, one at Sées, one at Troarn, and one at Avranches

. . . . .

The pagan forebears of these self-same religiously zealous Normans destroyed or despoiled many ecclesiastical houses, relics of earlier Roman christianity and civilization, when they first came to Neustria from across the sea, and among those whose restoration or enrichment dates from this eleventh century period were the cathedral churches of Rouen, Bayeux, and Evreux ; all three were, and are still, dedicated to " Our Lady ", the cathedral of Notre Dame at Bayeux more than either of the other two retaining intact to this day much of the original Norman work.

The abbey of Jumiège too with a history richer

and more varied than almost any other religious house in Normandy, established by Clovis in the seventh century, destroyed by the Norsemen in the ninth, and rebuilt by Guillaume Longue Epée in the tenth, was a special object of William's bounty, and much of its power, wealth and influence at that time was due to his munificence. It was his favourite abbey, and the memories clustered about it seemed to appeal strongly to his imagination; he often spent days there in the practice of his devotions, and never wearied of the tales told of his Norse ancestors, who, under Hastings, "son of perdition," their foreheads marked with blood, ascended the Seine, wrecked and despoiled the abbey, and massacred the ninety odd inmates, monks, who had only godliness for their defence, their altars for a refuge. The very ground William considered Holy Ground, stained with the blood of martyrs, and each time he was there he knelt upon it, honouring in his prayers the memory of such saints.

Edward the Confessor, when an exiled Prince in Normandy, spent part of his youth at this famous Benedictine Abbey, and one of the monks, Robert de Jumiège, to whom he was much attached, followed the Saxon Prince when he was recalled to his kingdom across the sea, and became later Archbishop of Canterbury: another

monk, Guillaume de Jumiège, was one of the most versatile chroniclers of the eleventh century, and many of the interesting details of William's life are alone found in his history of the Norman Dukes. The two lofty towers of the ancient basilica, outlined against the sky, and several picturesque portions of the old walls pierced with Norman windows, which rise from amid the poplars on the right bank of the Seine below Rouen, together with an imperishable name, are all that are now left to remind us of the former greatness of this grand old abbey.

But the most famous abbey in all Normandy was that of Le Bec-Hellouin, which was to the northern Duchy what Cluny was to France, a centre of civilization and learning and "the originator of all literary progress".

Le Bec was founded about 1030, but owes its chief fame, and one which succeeding centuries has not dimmed, to the two famous men within its walls at the time of which we are speaking, Lanfranc, "the most renowned teacher of his age," and Anselm, later "Saint", the profoundest thinker of the eleventh century. Italians by birth, and with the culture of civilization of generations behind them, the influence of both men for good in the land of their adoption was far reaching, and each was destined to carry this influence far beyond the confines of Normandy,

and successively, as Primates of England, to occupy the See of Canterbury.

The restoration of the monastery of St. Evroult at Ouche, by the Counts Robert and Hughes de Grantemenil, an absorbing story but too long to relate here, took place at this time, and is most interesting, as the abbey was for many years the home of Orderic Vital who wrote in his "Histoire de Normandie", a veritable treasure-trove of mediaeval writing, so much, and so impartially of Duke William. Ordericus Vitalis, to give the Latin form of his name, was born in England of Saxon parentage on the distaff side about 1055. But after the death of his mother, and about the time of the conquest, he "was conveyed" to quote his own words, "with weeping eyes from his native country to Normandy to be educated at the convent of Ouche," which finally became so dear to him that he entered the order, attained the rank of Father-Abbot, and passed his entire life affectionately absorbed in the furtherance of the abbey's interest.

Orderic Vital tells with a charm, peculiarly his own, of a visit Mathilde paid to the abbey, noted for the sanctity and good order among its inmates and relates that after the Duchess had been received with all honour by the monks assembled together, she placed an offering of a mark of gold upon the altar, and recommended

herself to the devout prayers of the abbot and his brethren, to whom she presented a rich chasuble embroidered with gold and ornamented with pearls.

On another occasion, but whether antedating or following this visit is not made clear, Mathilde gave a costly mitre and a cope, and one hundred Rouennaises livres to build a refectory.

But both William's and Mathilde's gifts to the church were always marked by great magnificence, and it is related that later in William's life, having been admitted as an associate-brother to the Benedictine Abbey of Cluny, near Macon in France, which served as his model for many religious houses both in Normandy and England, he sent to the abbot and monks in acknowledgment of the favour granted, " a cope nearly all gold ; scarcely anything was to be seen in it but gold, or amber, or patterns in pearl wrought into the texture, or rows of precious stones ; and it had a fringe of little gold bells all along the lower border." Mathilde, on the same occasion sent a chasuble, so stiff by reason of its magnificence that it could not be folded. Regal gifts truly, and worthy of a place in Cluny, the foster-home in those days of every art.

This same Orderic Vital, wrote thus of William's capital, " The city of Rouen, is populous and very rich, by reason of its different kinds of commerce ;

it is very agreeable, because of the concourse of ships united in its port, by the murmur of the running water, and by the charm of its meadows. An abundance of fruit, of fish, and of all sorts of provisions, adds to its opulence. The hills and the forests, which surround it on all sides, and the walls, retrenchments and other military constructions, make it very strong. It has received much renown, because of its buildings, as well as the aspect of its houses and churches."

The natural charms, the hills, the swiftly flowing Seine, the pleasant meadows, together with the concourse of ships, the noble buildings, the air of industry and opulence are as truly characteristic of Rouen now as then, but alas! imagination alone must picture the Château where Normandy's greatest duke and his duchess spent so many years together, for there is no vestige nor trace of it in the Rouen of to-day.

But, on the site of the "Ancienne Halles", which borders the modern Quai de Paris by the Pont Corneille, the land now intersected by irregular streets lined with unpretentious shops and warehouses, once stood the castle, the "Tour de Rouen", or "Haute Vieille Tour", of the Norman Dukes; approached by a series of steps from without, a lofty as well as vast and well-nigh impregnable stronghold it must have been in William's time. There was an outer and an

inner court, donjon and moat, and protecting crenellated walls with loop-holes arranged with all the paraphernalia for defence known in the eleventh century. A fortress in short, as well as a castle. And it was because of its very strength, or was it perhaps to better efface their memory? that Philippe-Auguste of France when he took possession of Rouen in 1204, and incidentally of all Normandy as well, destroyed the château of the Norman dukes. The walls were demolished, the ground levelled, and the land turned over to the burghers of the city for the purposes of trade. But countless memories hover about the "Tour de Rouen", for it was the home of William and Mathilde when in their capital city, and it was there in all probability that many of their children were born, Henri the fourth being the only child who first saw the light in England.

It was not the custom of the biographers of the eleventh century to record birthdays, therefore we have no exact dates of the birth of William's and Mathilde's children; and as regards the daughters even the number, although it is generally conceded that there were five, order and names are given in a contradictory way by different chroniclers. Following Orderic Vital, Adèle, called "l'amie des pauvres", the namesake of her maternal grandmother, Adèle of France, married Count Etienne de Blois, and was the

mother of Stephen of England. Constance married Alain Fergant, Duke of Brittany. Cécile, the eldest daughter, became a nun in the convent founded by her mother at Caen. Agathe, too, took the veil, but it was not until some time after the Conquest and following the tragic death of Edwine, Duke of Northumbria, to whom she is said to have been devoutly attached. But it is the gentle Aelfgiva, or Elgiva, the scene of whose betrothal to Harold forms one of the most interesting panels in the Bayeux Tapestry, who is almost beatified by Orderic Vital because of her goodness and sanctity; much has been written of Elgiva in the old chronicles and she is pictured as having dearly loved the Saxon prince, and to have mourned his false troth and tragic death with a broken heart. After the battle of Hastings, dutifully yielding to the will of her father, Aelfgiva was affianced to Amfurcius, King of Galicia. She did not live to reach Spain, however, but died as had been her prayer on the voyage thither, and her body, brought back to Normandy, was interred in the choir of the Bayeux Cathedral, where for many years, on December 10th, the anniversary of her death, Mass was celebrated for the repose of her soul.

Robert, the eldest child of the Ducal pair, nicknamed because of his short legs and ungainly

body "Courte-Cuisse", anglicized "Short-Hose", is invariably represented in the pictures of the time with his toque nonchalently perched on the side of his head, with falcon on wrist as if ready for some expedition of pleasure. He was gay, audacious, prodigal of both his love and his money, a valiant soldier and possessed of a singularly winning personality, but withal, headstrong and undisciplined. Mathilde's favourite, one of the greatest sorrows of her life was the frequent quarrels which, especially in later years, arose between William and his unruly son; even her tactful love proving ineffectual in keeping peace between them. Richard, the second son, who gave every promise of being a fine man, met his death accidentally while still a youth, following the chase in the Hampshire forest near Winchester. The young Prince while in full pursuit of a stag rode unwittingly against the low-lying branch of a tree with such force that the blow proved fatal. His reckless ardour in the chase, however, amounted almost to a passion, and led him on several occasions to seriously infringe upon his father's prerogatives. Duke William's ire was easily aroused, especially in matters concerning his favourite pastime, and on one occasion, in the heat of resentment against his young son, who had interfered with his game, the Duke gave peremptory orders to

the chasses-gardes, that should the young Prince have the temerity to repeat the offence he was to be treated with the same severity shown a common peasant. Richard's early and tragic death nevertheless was a great grief to William, who declared with tears that except in matters pertaining to the chase Richard had always been a most loving and dutiful child.

As Robert, the first-born, was his mother's favourite, so was the third son, William's namesake, Guillaume, surnamed le Roux, the child to whom he showed the greatest affection, the Duke's manifest preference for him being one of the chief causes in the beginning of Robert's jealousy and dissatisfaction. Like his brother Richard, Guillaume inherited from his father a violent passion for the chase, and like Richard in the end, but only after a course of many long and sinful years, met his death, in the self-same New Forest, while following it. Duke William made this Prince his favourite companion and as time went on William Rufus, to give him his English name, was rarely absent from his father's side, and together they shared the dangers of battle and the joys of the chase. It is strange that Duke William, whose penetration and marvellous gift of reading men's character aright is historical, should have been in this instance so strangely blind to the faults which later made

William Rufus one of the most cruel and hated sovereigns who ever sat on the English throne. Selfish and cold by nature, ambitious, calculating, avaricious and vindictively cruel, he seems to have inherited in an intensified form the vices and not the virtues of Duke William, who might easily have bestowed his affection and interest more worthily upon his fourth son Henri, called Beau-clerc. In both character and attainments, Henri far surpassed his brothers, and proved a worthy pupil of a great master, for from earliest childhood, with the idea, at first perhaps, of entering the church, his education was placed by William in charge of the renowned Lanfranc. Henri, in the end, as William on his deathbed foretold, possessed and wisely governed the united inheritances of both Robert and William Rufus, and it was he, Henri, who eventually handed down his father's fame to posterity. He was one of the best and noblest rulers England ever had, and through his daughter Mathilde the founder of the Plantagenet line of English kings.

From all accounts William's consort, Mathilde of Flanders, must have been endowed, not only with unusual beauty of person and nobleness of character, but with a mind of great natural aptitude, which, reinforced by the wise training of her mother, Adèle of France, raised her in intelligence far above most of the other princesses of her time.

It was she who was chosen to guide the affairs of state during William's frequent absences from Normandy, and her wise, prudent and kindly rule ever proved the choice a happy one. A loving and devoted mother to her children, a counsellor and friend, as well as help-meet to her husband, and revered by her subjects, Mathilde's influence at court, a court where still lingered many customs tinged with the rudeness of barbarism, was always exerted for all that was uplifting, noble and good ; she encouraged the gentler arts of civilization, music, poetry, and architecture, and in this connection one loves best to picture her in the " Galerie des Brodeuses ", in the château at Rouen, surrounded by the young Princesses and her maidens, occupying herself with the embroidery tradition has ever associated with her name, the record of the events leading up to her husband's conquest of England, the famous " Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde ".

It is difficult to form an absolutely just idea of William's characteristics, for not only in many respects do they seem contradictory, but the early chroniclers in writing of them are rarely moderate in their tone, their language being either that of love or hate. If William is described as austere in manner, he yet knew how at times to temper his natural severity with a gentleness impossible to resist ; as avaricious, and making

a study of filling his coffers, he could be generous, even prodigal of expense on occasions ; impetuous by nature, none knew better than he how to patiently await the moment best suited to attain the end he had in view. An implacable and relentless enemy, and quick to avenge personal affront, he could be signally magnanimous when dealing with a vanquished foe, or reward with a lavish hand those who rendered him service.

Built in an heroic mould, with great majesty of mien and bearing, William in his youth was deemed handsome ; in latter years his size assumed almost the proportions of unwieldy bulk ; his strength was prodigious ; no man could draw his bow, which he himself could bend when his horse was at full gallop, and few share to the end his physical fatigue.

His life seemed a charmed one, and he escaped unscathed a score of times from dangers which would have seemed insurmountable to others. Norman cunning and astuteness played an important rôle in his success. His personal magnetism was very great, and evil men quailed when confronted with the power and majesty of his gaze. His temper was well under control ; his moral life irreproachable ; and he was abstemious in both his food and drink.

" William in his own person heard and judged the cause of the poor, the fatherless, and the

widowed; his justice kept back his courtiers and favourites from deeds of wrong, and in his days the mighty man durst not move the landmark of his poorer neighbour . . . William, from his youth up, layman and Prince as he was, set a model to priests and prelates; he chose the good among them for his friends and counsellors and he visited the unjust and neglectful with his severest displeasure . . . Under his government churches arose, monasteries were restored to the purity of their rule, and Abbots, bishops, and all ranks of the clergy became models in the due discharge of their several duties."

A great soldier, an eminent statesman, an acute politician, and an able administrator, it was owing to William's wise laws and energetic rule that Normandy rose far above the other states of her time in power and glory; it was he who laid the foundation stone for England's future greatness, and as Guizot says, "England owes her liberties to her having been conquered by the Normans."

CHAPTER V

Regarding the old bonds of union between Normandy and England—Norman domination in England under Edward the Confessor—William of Normandy visits the court of his kinsman, Edward the Confessor—Regarding the two Saxon hostages retained in Normandy—Earl Godwin's death—His eldest son, Harold, inherits his wealth and power—Harold sets out to visit William of Normandy—Harold wrecked off the coast of Picardy—Seized and imprisoned by Gui, Count de Ponthieu—Released at William's intervention—Harold receives lavish hospitality in Rouen and throughout Normandy—Accompanies Duke William on an expedition to Brittany—Harold shows great valour at Mont-Saint-Michel-en-Peril-de-Mer and Dinan—Harold's promises to William—Renewal of his promises under oath at Bayeux—Harold's disloyal conduct toward William on his return to England—Edward the Confessor's piety and good works—Westminster Abbey—Consternation caused in England at the sight of the comet—Elmer, a monk of Malmesbury, prophesies disaster to England—King Edward's death scene—His burial in the West Minster—Harold's accession.

CHAPTER V

"William, Earl came from beyond sea with mickle company of Frenchmen, and the King him received, and as many of his comrades as to him seemed good, and let him go again."

Chron. Wig.

The interests of England have until now appeared to have little connection with those of Normandy, but for a long time relations had been forming between the two countries which were destined soon to produce an extraordinary change.

It will be remembered that in the time of William's grandfather, Richard II le Bon (996-1026), the Saxon King, Ethelred the Unready, driven from his throne by the Danes, sought refuge with his wife's family in Normandy, the Princess Emma, called by the Norman bards "Fleur de Normandie", being a daughter of the reigning Duke. On Ethelred's death Emma married her first husband's rival and successor, Canute the Dane, but her two sons, the Saxon princes Alfred and Edward, continued to live on as before in Normandy, and an attempt later, on the part of the queen-mother, when again a widow, to reinstate them in England, resulted

in the tragic death of Alfred, who was kidnapped upon the road to Winchester, where he was to join his mother, and after his eyes had been put out, left to die at Ely, while Edward was forced to flee for his life, and seek anew an asylum across the sea. Prince Edward was recalled to the throne of his ancestors in 1043, but it naturally followed that by education, and through the close bonds of early association, affection and gratitude, he remained absolutely Norman in all his tastes and inclinations. A prodigious number of Normans followed him to England, and Edward, who was of a simple, good and generous nature, received with affection " les hommes de Gaule ", the compatriots of those who had done so much for him when he was in exile and distress : his confidants, advisers, and priests were all Normans, Norman-French was the language of the court and the open sesame to the King's favour and such faith had he in his favourites that, it is said, had they shown him a black crow, telling him at the same time that it was a white one, Edward would have believed them rather than the testimony of his own eyes !

Thus, common interests, as well as the bonds of kinship and affection, united the rulers of the two countries, and it was natural that now the affairs of Normandy were in a prosperous and settled state, William should have determined

to pay a visit, one long promised, to the English court. He confided the government of the Duchy to Mathilde, and accompanied by a brilliant retinue of knights set forth, in 1061,[1] for London.

So complete was the Norman domination of that time, writes Augustin Thierry, that in passing through England, "William might think for the moment that he had never left his own dukedom: Normans commanded the fleet which he found stationed in the port of Dover; at Canterbury Norman soldiers garrisoned the fort on the hill; and other Normans in the garb of either Captains, or Prelates, came to greet and welcome him." At London King Edward received the Duke of Normandy as a son, treated him with every mark of affection and honour, and costly gifts, magnificent arms, drinking cups in gold, ornamented with figures in bas-relief, horses, hunting dogs, and birds trained for the chase, were lavished upon him by his cousin, who never forgot he owed the home of his youth, his education and the very preservation of his life to the Normans. The warmth of his reception equally astonished, delighted and flattered Duke William.

Some Norman chroniclers assert it was during his stay at the English court that King Edward, being childless, promised William to appoint

[1] The year is variously given by different chroniclers.

him his heir and successor. Some aver that this promise was but the reiteration of one already made him in Normandy by the mouth of Robert of Jumiège, Archbishop of Canterbury: others go so far as to say Edward drew up a private testament at this time in favour of his cousin. We do not know the real truth.

But whether true or false that Edward promised the throne verbally, in writing, or by inference, to his kinsman, we may be sure that from this visit dated William's ambition to be one day King of England.

Early in his reign Edward the Confessor, for reason of state rather than for those of love, had married the Lady Edith, daughter of the most powerful Saxon noble, Godwin, Earl of Kent, Master of the King's Household, and ruler of the West Saxons: but either because of a vow of perpetual chastity some say Edward had made in youth, or as affirmed by other chroniclers because of the bitter hatred he ever felt towards his father-in-law, whom he openly accused of being party to his brother Alfred's death, the King is generally supposed to have been a husband to her in name only; and there were no children of the union to inherit the English throne.

Of humble birth Godwin, son of Ulfnoth the cow-herd, owed the beginning of his rise in fortune

to services rendered the Danes at the time of Canute. Arrogant and self-seeking, he was nevertheless a man of great ability, and the leader of the Anglo-Saxon party, who while venerating the person of the King, was strongly opposed to the rule of Norman favouritism. As the chief instigator of openly rebellious conduct toward the King at one time, Godwin and his family had been banished from England, and Queen Edith as of their blood, despoiled of her possession, was shut up in a cloister: but when Godwin and his friends had succeeded in compassing the fall and dismissal of the principal foreign favourites, "parce qu'ils troublaient la paix du royaume, en excitant le roi contre ses peuples," King Edward was forced to pardon the exiled Earl, whom he feared as well as hated, and Godwin returned to England and his former power and wealth. Queen Edith reappeared at court, and her brothers regained their erstwhile authority.

Nevertheless as guarantee of his good faith and submission, Godwin was forced to leave his young son Ulfnoth, and his nephew Haco, as hostages with the King, who in turn for better surety committed them to the care of William of Normandy; their presence at the Norman court later playing a significant part in the history of William's life.

Not long after Duke William's visit to England, the Earl of Kent died, struck down, some old chroniclers relate, by the avenging hand of God himself, in the very act of perjury. While dining one day at the royal table some words escaped King Edward which showed the keen resentment he still felt towards Godwin as responsible for Prince Alfred's death: rising to address his sovereign, Earl Godwin, overcome with emotion, said, "I understand, Sire, that in spite of my oath of innocence, and my Acquittal by the council of Wise Men, you still hold me accountable for the death of the Prince, your brother, but in order that you may have no further doubt of my sincerity I pray God that this piece of bread which I am about to put into my mouth will choke me on the spot if I had the least part in Alfred's death." As he finished speaking Godwin put the fatal morsel into his mouth and powerless to swallow it, choked, and sank to the floor, his eyes closed in death.

The Earl's estates and wealth, the dignity of his high position in the royal household, and the government of the West Saxons all passed into the hands of his eldest son Harold, called le Brave, who, more loyal and magnanimous, more ingratiating and more deferential to the King's wishes than his father had been, was soon high in his sovereign's favour. He was rarely

absent from the old King's side ; his voice carried weight at the royal council ; his brilliant military achievements against the turbulent Welsh made him popular with the nation ; he won from King Edward the affection of a father, the confidence of a friend, and gradually as age and infirmities pressed upon the already feeble monarch, Harold's power and influence at court and in the government was supreme.

And it was this Saxon prince who was now William of Normandy's formidable rival for the prize for which both were striving, the throne of England.

Some four years after William's visit to England Harold asked leave of King Edward to visit Normandy in his name, and reclaim from the Duke the Saxon hostages, Ulfnoth and Haco, Earl Godwin's death making their retention in the Duchy no longer necessary. The old King reluctantly gave his consent, saying " I will not constrain thee, but if thou goest it is against my inclination for the journey will not be an auspicious one. I know Duke William, and his astuteness ; he hates thee, and will accord thee nothing unless it be to his own profit ; the way to make him restore the hostages would be to send some other ambassador than thou ". But Harold made light of the old man's fears, heeded not his advice, and surrounded by companions

as joyous as himself at the prospect of a visit to a foreign court, " with his sparrow-hawk upon his wrist, his hunting dogs, and equipage of chase," set sail for Normandy from Bosham, a port in Sussex. An old-world charm still lingers about the Bosham of to-day, a quaint fishing-village at the head of a creek leading into the sea. Tradition says Earl Godwin, and his son after him, had a home there and going still further back that Canute had a manor house at Bosham, where his little daughter who died was buried in the church ; the same church, grey and venerable now, stands a living witness to the time when Harold, as depicted in the Bayeux tapestry, paid his devotions, afterwards feasting in the Earl's Hall, before setting forth for Normandy.

Contrary winds blew then as now, and Harold's ship, driven on the coast of Picardy, was wrecked on the shore of the Comté of Ponthieu, near the mouth of the river Somme. A Norman fisherman, who frequented the English coast, recognized the Saxon prince and hastened at once to Count Gui de Ponthieu, telling him that if he would give him twenty livres he would show him a prisoner who would gladly pay a thousand for his ransom ! A barbarous custom, the so-called " Strand-laws ", in vogue in Picardy as well as in other parts of France at that time, invested the Seigneur of the district with the

pretended rights of "bris et naufrage", by virtue of which rights the person and property of the wrecked were looked upon as gifts sent by God. "An execrable custom," exclaims Guillaume de Poitiers, "which contrary to all Christian justice, avarice invented among some of the Gallic peoples. Snares were laid for the mighty, they were shut up in prison and overwhelmed with outrage and torture." The higher the rank of the victim the harder his doom, for a larger ransom could be wrung from nobles than men of meaner rank. Harold and his companions were therefore promptly seized by Gui, Signeur of Ponthieu, despoiled of all they possessed, put into irons, and imprisoned in the Château de Beaurain near Montreuil-sur-Mer.[1] In these dire straits Harold, as some affirm resorting to subterfuge, at once declared himself the bearer of a message to the Duke of Normandy; and found means of letting William know of what had befallen him while en route to his capital: he begged the Duke to come to his aid and not only to demand his freedom but to punish the Count of Ponthieu for having treated with such harshness an ambassador sent by the King of England to the Norman Court. Duke William immediately demanded Harold's release,

[1] In the modern town of Blaurainville a tower of the ancient château where Harold was confined is still standing.

at the same time upbraiding the Count in no mild terms for forcibly retaining a foreign prince who, while on the way to Rouen, had had the misfortune to be cast by a tempest upon his inhospitable shores. Menaces prevailed where entreaties had no effect and Gui's final obedience to William's demands was rewarded with fitting generosity on the part of the Norman Duke, who, in exchange for the prisoners shortly delivered into his hands, all so graphically pictured in the Bayeux tapestry, bestowed upon Count Gui a " fort beau manoir ", and other " biens ", which together amounted to a goodly ransom. Harold was received at Rouen by Duke William with the greatest honour, and both he, and the knights of his suite were equipped anew, for they had been stripped of all equipage, with arms and horses, by their host. The two hostages were restored to the Saxon Prince, and in fêtes, jousts, tournaments, banquets, and the pleasures of the chase Harold was soon made to forget the unpleasant experiences through which he had passed: his growing fondness, too, for the Duke's daughter, Aelfgiva, and the winning graces of the Duchess in furthering the romance played, it is said, no small part in this forgetfulness. Their love for each other, more especially that of Aelfgiva for the handsome and debonnaire Saxon prince, is noted in the chronicles, and the modern

author, Ernst von Wildenbruch, taking his theme from their old writings perhaps, depicts in his fine tragedy "Harold" many charming love scenes between them; but following some authorities he designates Adèle, who later married Count Etienne de Blois, as being Harold's fiancée.

Not only in Rouen, but everywhere throughout Normandy Harold and his companions enjoyed the most lavish hospitality; different cities and innumerable châteaux were visited, and together with Duke William they even went to the French Court, then in residence at Compiègne, to witness, and perhaps show, their prowess in the magnificent tournaments arranged by the Regent, Count Baudouin of Flanders, for the pleasure of the young King Philippe I.

It was about this time that Duke William set out for Brittany on a punitive expedition against the young Duke Conan II, Normandy's claimed suzerainty, denied by Brittany, being, as of old, the basis of the trouble between the rulers of the two duchies. At William's invitation Harold and his companions, who were anxious to prove their valour in the eyes of their host, and also perhaps glad of the opportunity of seeing the Norman method of warfare, took up arms with him and joined it; William and Harold throughout the campaign ever sharing the same tent and table. Following the details given in the

Bayeux tapestry the Saxons amply proved their mettle in Brittany, and at Mont-Saint-Michel-en-Peril-de-Mer, on the border-line between the two States, Harold himself, with prodigious strength and courage rescued several Normans, who, while crossing the river Conesnon were being engulfed in the treacherous quick-sands which, to this day, abound in the neighbourhood of the famous island fortress. At Dol the Bretons fled before the Norman forces, and at the taking of Dinan, which made William master of the situation, Harold again displayed such signal bravery that he was knighted on the spot by Duke William himself, and thereby became his "man". One day on returning toward Bayeux, as they rode together side by side, William abandoned himself to the pleasure of reminiscence with Harold; he told him of his troubled childhood, of the treachery of some of his kinsmen, his struggles with the barons, his wars with the French; he spoke of the old and close connection with King Edward, and little by little led up to the subject of his own ambitions regarding the throne of England. "When Edward and I lived under the same roof," said the Duke, "he promised that if he should ever become King of England he would make me his heir to the throne; Harold, I should like that thou aidest me to realize this promise, and rest assured that

if, by thy help, I obtain the kingdom, anything that thou askest of me, I will grant thee." Surprised and disconcerted by William's demand, Harold with vague words of allegiance feigned acquiescence in the Duke's request. William did not conceal from Harold that he knew of his own ambitious views, warning him at the same time of the obstacles in the way of their fulfilment; of the opposition he must expect from the partisans of young Edgar, a prince of royal Saxon blood, and the possible jealous rivalry of other ambitious English nobles, who like Harold himself had no claim by right of birth to the English crown. "As for myself," continued William, "you will find me an enemy lacking neither courage, money, nor troops, to uphold the right which I shall yield only with my life." Harold remained silent and the Duke continued, "as thou consentest to serve me thou must bind thyself to fortify the château at Dover: and to deliver it to my soldiers as soon as I demand it of thee: furthermore I desire that thou shouldst marry my daughter Aelfgiva: and that thou shouldst give thy sister in marriage to one of my barons. As pledge of thy promise thou must leave me one of the two hostages whom I have already restored to thee: I shall bring him myself to England when I arrive there as King." William ceased speaking, and fixed his

penetrating gaze upon Harold, who, agitated, confused and speechless, hesitated for a moment, was silent, and then, "not knowing how to evade it," promised all the Duke had asked of him.

We must remember that as Freeman says "there is no portion perhaps of any history which is more entangled in the maze of contradictory, and oft times impossible statements, than that on which we are now entering; and that of the personal relations between William and Harold, of which the Norman writers are so full, contemporary English writers are completely, no doubt significantly, silent".

Harold may have been cajoled into making a promise he had no serious intention of fulfilling, but he certainly incurred guilt in trifling with what ought to have been either a refusal or a solemn engagement.

A few days later Duke William, not feeling quite sure of Harold's good faith, and wishing to engage him in a still more solemn way, convoked a large number of the principal Norman Seigneurs and prelates at Bayeux: and at the appointed time, when all were assembled in the council hall, the Duke seated under a canopy prepared for him, his coronet upon his head, his naked sword in his hand, demanded of Harold that he should publicly renew the promises

already given in private. "Now the Duke had had many Holy Relics brought from Rouen, which were in the hall in the shrine, covered with a cloth of gold; and on the cloth of gold lay a missal opened at one of the gospels."

"'Harold', said William, 'I desire that before this noble assembly thou confirmest by oath the promises which thou hast already made to me, namely, to assist me to obtain the throne of England, after the death of King Edward, and to marry my daughter Aelfgiva. Harold dared not thus publicly prove false to his given word and, after a moment's hesitation, placed his right hand on the missal and swore on the Holy Gospels under his hand that, should he live, he would with God's help fulfil his covenant with the Duke; the chant, Ke Dex li dont! of those present, echoing the words of his solemn vow. Then at a sign from the Duke the cloth of gold was raised, and when Harold saw over what sacred and venerable relics he had taken his oath, his face blanched, and he began to tremble.'"

Then the Duke reassured and encouraged him, saying he well knew he would keep to his agreement, and that he on his part would do his duty. Shortly afterwards the Saxon Prince returned to England, laden with costly gifts bestowed upon him by Duke William, who with every mark of honour accompanied him in person as

far as the sea. Haco, one of the two hostages, returned with Harold, but William still kept Ulfnoth in Normandy as a guarantee of his brother's good faith and fidelity. What account Harold gave King Edward of his visit to Normandy is not established: but once again in England, considering his covenant with Duke William as a forced procedure which neither religion nor honour bound him to consider, he used to advantage his knowledge of William's plans, and redoubled his efforts for his own advancement. And everything seemed in Harold's favour, for King Edward, weighed down by age and infirmities, and failing rapidly, left him an almost absolutely free hand in the government, and himself withdrew, more and more, from active participation in the affairs of state. His days were given over entirely to religious exercises and works of charity: the poor received his bounty; churches and abbeys were richly endowed, and the most splendid monument to his piety and goodness, Westminster Abbey, built from his private purse, was now nearly ready to be dedicated to the worship of God. The story of the building of this Abbey is not without interest. Early in his reign King Edward made a solemn vow to make a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Peter in Rome, but dissuaded by his Witan, who feared the consequences of his leaving

the kingdom for the length of time such a journey would necessarily entail, from carrying out his desire, he was dispensed by the Pope, Leo IX, from his vow and bidden instead to found, or enlarge a monastery in England in the Saint's honour. Outside the Western Gate of London, a monastery had already been established in the earliest Christian times in England, and dedicated to St. Peter, and it was this Abbey, poor as it at the time was, with mean buildings and few monks, that King Edward chose for the redemption of his vow; but because of its relative position to the Church of St. Paul, within the city walls, the Minster was familiarly known as the West-Minster, instead of the church of St. Peter, and by the name of Westminster it is known to-day. For many years King Edward devoted the tithe of all his royal revenues to this building; but there are merely portions left in the present structure of the original church, which at the time it was built was the first and greatest example of Norman architecture in England. The consecration took place but a few days before Edward's death, and when the good news was brought to the King, who was too ill to be present, tradition says he laid his head upon his pillow as if to say—"now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace".

But sinister rumours were abroad in the land:

prophecies of dire calamities which were coming to England from across the sea, and a brilliant star, or comet, with a long and fiery tail which illumed the southern heavens for 15 consecutive nights added terror and apprehension to all but the stoutest hearts. In the words of a Latin distich of the time—

> Anno milleno sexageno quoque seno,
> Anglorum metal flammas sensere cometae.

The strange star, men said, denoted a change of dynasty and Elmer, a holy monk of Malmesbury, bowing down with terror at the sight of it exclaimed: "Thou art come, a matter of lamentation to many a mother thou art come; it is many years since I have seen thee shine, but never hast thou appeared more terrible than to-day when thou announcest the ruin of England at the hand of a stranger!"

And England's future was indeed uncertain, now that the last hours of Edward the Confessor had come. The monarch lay upon his death-bed, "the Lady Edith" at his feet, the principal nobles of the court headed by Harold, Earl of Wessex, gathered about him.

At last one of the nobles, in the name of those present, asked the dying prince to give them as over-lord the one man who could protect England from the dangers which menaced her: raised to a sitting position by his command, King

Edward, with what strength was left him replied, "Seigneur et amis, je vous mercie de ce que vous vous louez de moi, aussi fais je de vous, You speak of my naming a King to succeed me: you know that during my life I provided for your welfare and left my kingdom to William of Normandy, and my oath and good faith are known to many nobles of this land: If I now give my realm to Harold, I fear that he will not be able to hold it in peace." "By my faith," said Harold, "give it to me and I will well hold it against all men." "Then," said King Edward to Harold, "Harold, thou shalt have my kingdon, but little do I know Duke William and his Normans, if thou art not already a dead man." And as they urged him to speak further the dying monarch, as he sank back upon his couch, stretched forth his hand and said, "To thee, Harold, I commit my kingdom." [1]

Shortly after these words, on January the fifth, 1066, in the sixty-fifth year of his age and the twenty-sixth of his reign, Edward the Confessor, the last English King of royal Saxon blood, passed away.

Two days later King Edward was laid to rest

[1] The English chroniclers omit the first part of this supposed interview, and make Edward stretch forth his hand at the last and say: "To thee, Harold, my brother, I commit my kingdom."

in the Church of his own building and immediately following the funeral, in the same West-Minster, in the presence of the principal nobles of the court, Harold was crowned by Stigand, Archbishop of Canterbury, King of England, the people, who regarded Edward's last words as of almost divine inspiration, approving the choice as if it was heaven's own: "and they presented the young King, together with the crown of gold and the gilded sceptre, a large battle-axe, old emblem of the native Saxon land. And, from his accession, Harold, son of Godwin, showed himself pious, discreet, and affable, and spared himself no toil, on land nor sea in defence of his country."

CHAPTER VI

Duke William is told of King Edward's death and Harold's accession—William's terrible agitation—He is aroused by Guillaume FitzOsbern's words of encouragement—William sends an ambassador to Harold to summon him to keep his Oath—Undaunted by Harold's reply William again sends a messenger to the Saxon King—Harold rejects William's proposals—William's patience and forbearance at an end—War between Normandy and England inevitable—William summons a council to consider means of obtaining money and supplies for his undertaking—Tumult and opposition among the members—Disaffected members won over by William's forceful personality—Generous donations—Men flock to serve under William's banner—William sends two of his bishops to Rome to lay his case before the Holy Father—Alexander II after considering the matter declares himself in favour of William's cause—France refuses to aid William—Other countries more zealous in giving their support — Feverish activity in Normandy—Duchess Mathilde chosen Regent—Her activity in furthering William's interests—William's army at Dives—at St. Valery-Sur-Somme—Discontent among William's followers—William's courage undaunted—The Shrine of St. Valery carried throughout the Norman camp—The long desired wind from the South favours the fleet's departure—The " Mora "—The crossing.

CHAPTER VI

"For this man Harold, though possessing numberless good qualities, is reported to have been careless about abstaining from perfidy, so that he could by any device elude the reasoning of men on this matter."
William of Malmesbury.

Duke William was in his pleasaunce of Quivilly, across the river from Rouen, and with a number of his knights around him, was about to enter the forest of Rouvray to follow the chase: yelping hounds, impatient in the frosty morning air to be off on the trail, were tugging at leash: squires were hurrying to and fro at their master's bidding: and the Duke, "who loved the fallow deer as if he had been their own father," standing apart from the others, long-bow in hand, was busily testing its merits before giving the signal to set forth.

As he was thus occupied a messenger approached, one sent in all haste from England by a Norman seigneur there, and saluting the Duke led him aside, and in secret told him of King Edward's death, and the circumstances attending Harold's coronation. In Wace's words—

"Ke li Reis Ewart est finez,
E Heraut est à Rei levez."

For some moments Duke William remained immovable, as if stunned by the news, then handing his bow to one of his attendants, recrossed the Seine, and hurriedly entered his château at Rouen: there he shut himself in the great hall and with every sign of terrible agitation of mind strode violently to and fro grinding his teeth: "he spake not a word, and if he seated himself it was but to rise again to change his bench and posture: nor could he remain still in any one place, and none of his people dared approach, nor speak a word to him."

At length the famous Seneschal of Normandy, Guillaume FitzOsbern, William's favourite knight and the friend of his childhood, leaving the group of anxious and wondering courtiers, approached Duke William.

"Seigneur," said he, "why conceal the news which distresses your mind? It is reported in Rouen that the King of England is dead and that Harold, false to his faith to you, has taken possession of the kingdom."

"It is true," said the Duke, "the death of King Edward and Harold's injustice towards me weigh heavily upon me."

Guillaume FitzOsbern replied with spirit, "Seigneur, none should enrage themselves with what can be corrected: well can you amend Harold's injury: you have a large number of

men inured to war, ready to obey you : there only remains for you to have good heart ; anything rightly undertaken is already half accomplished."

Aroused by FitzOsbern's words and encouraged by his assurance of the good disposition of his subjects, William on the instant was inspired with the resolve of upholding his pretentions by force of arms if necessary, and all present were astonished to see him, after such a period of excessive agitation, become suddenly calm.

William's first action in support of his claim was to send an ambassador to Harold, charged to summon him to keep his oath, the oath " which he had sworn to him by his mouth, with his hand on good and holy relics."

" In truth," replied King Harold on hearing the Duke's message, " I gave my oath to William ; but I gave it under the pressure of force. That which I promised did not belong to me, for the realm which has been conferred upon me by the unanimous vote of the nation was not then mine : I should not know how to part with it without the consent of the people. For like reason without the will of the nation I cannot marry a foreign wife. As to my sister, whom the Duke claims in marriage for one of his lords, she died this year ; does he wish me to send him a bier and a corpse ?"

Undaunted by this bold insolent reply and

concealing his anger, back once more to the Saxon King, Duke William sent his messenger. "If thou wilt not fulfil all the declared conditions," he apprized him by his envoy, "at least place on the throne beside you my daughter, Aelfgiva, whom thou hast promised to wed." Again Harold rejected William's proposal, and at once married a Saxon noble-woman, Aldguyth, a sister of two powerful English chiefs, Edwin and Morcar, dukes respectively of Northumbria and Mercia, whose friendship and support, after years of hostility to his house, Harold thus secured.

William's patience and forbearance were now at an end, and he announced that before the end of the year, he would exact all his debt, and "that he would pursue the perjurer Harold to the very places where he thought his footing firmest".

From now on war between Normandy and England was inevitable, and preparations were begun on both sides for the great struggle.

Duke William's first difficulty was to procure sufficient money and supplies of all kinds for the gigantic undertaking he had in view.

He therefore held a secret conference with those closest to him, his two half-brothers, Odo, Bishop of Bayeax and Robert, Count of Mortain, Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, Seneschal of Normandy,

Hughes d'Ivry, chief cup-bearer, Hughes de Grantmesnil, and others at the court high in his favour, and acting on their advice embodied in Bishop Odo's historic words,—" Raison est que qui paie l'ecot soit appele a'y consentir,"—to gain the support of his subjects, convoked a " pailement ", or assembly. It was formed of men in all ranks of life: warriors, men of the church, and merchants, the richest and most influential in the duchy.

The council met at Lilleboune, and to William's chagrin and disappointment, the majority of the members were at first unwilling to embrace his quarrel: the nation, they declared, was already exhausted in furnishing men and horses for previous wars, and they did not feel called upon to help their sovereign in a contest which had nothing to do with the interests of their country.

The most dissatisfied openly said,—" there was madness in such designes, and that they would give neither a sou from their pockets, nor a drop of their blood to satisfy the inordinate ambition of their Seigneur !"

Unrestrained by the Duke's presence, for he had purposely left the hall that they might deliberate more freely, the meeting soon became a stormy one, and it was with difficulty that William's faithful ally, Fitz-Osbern, could at last

make himself heard above the din and confusion. "Why do you dispute in this manner?" he said, "William is your Seigneur and your duty is to offer him supplies, not await his solicitation. If you fail him and he obtains his ends de par Dieu, never will he forget it. Act then with a good grace."

The effect of these words was but to increase the uproar and strife among the members of the assembly, and the most hot-headed angrily retorted: "In truth we know he is our Overlord, but he overwhelms us already with his imposts; we want to stay near our wives and children: not to conquer that distant land. If we follow him once across the sea he will demand it as a right in the future, not only of us, but of our children—that shall not be, that shall not be!" And the meeting broke up in the midst of a general tumult.

William, although little expecting such strong opposition to his project, concealed his anger, and not thus easily to be deterred from attaining his ends, determined to rely on diplomatic pressure, and the weight of his personal influence alone, to win over the disaffected members to his views. One by one the leading men were summoned to the Duke's presence, and individually he asked them for their aid and support, not as a right, he explained, but as a mark of friendship

and goodwill : he promised that their voluntary donations would in no way bind them for the future, and offered as gage thereof to give them a charter, sealed with his own great seal. His natural reserve and imperiousness for the moment cast aside, he showed himself gracious, and affable to each in turn, and as the subtlety of his mind suggested, cajoled, flattered, or entreated individual support. None separately dare resist his forceful persuasion, and the promises of the most influential once engaged, the others, following their lead, bound themselves to help him in his enterprise. Some promised vessels, some warriors fully equipped ; others foot-soldiers, or horses : men of the Church gave money : landowners offered provisions ; merchants gave of their goods. William's own family and entourage headed the list of generous contributors ; the Bishop of Bayeux and the Count of Mortain each gave one hundred and twenty vessels : Guillaume Fitz-Osbern promised to equip forty at his own expense ; the Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery of St. Ouen gave twenty ships and one hundred knights ; and others of less degree gave one ship, or more, each according to his means.

Before long this spirit of emulative zeal spread into every part of the Duchy, and the first objections entirely lost sight of, all Normandy

seemed eager, not only to avenge the Duke's wrong, but to embrace an enterprise which in magnitude and glory promised to surpass all those of their ancestors.

William now published his declaration of war in all the neighbouring countries and offered good pay and English plunder to " every man, strong, and tall, who would serve him with either lance, sword, or cross-bow ". From the four points of the compass they came in answer to his call : from Maine, Anjou, Brittany and France ; from Flanders, Burgundy, Piedmont, and even the borders of the Rhine. Some were knights and commanders, other simple foot-soldiers, and sergeants d'armes ; there were professional adventurers eager for booty and men whose fortunes at the lowest ebb were prepared to face any danger by either land or sea. " Some demanded pay or a lump sum in money, others their passsage only, and all the plunder they might acquire ; others wanted land among the English,—an estate, a castle, or a village : others simply desired the hand of some rich Saxon in marriage." All the wishes and all the demands of human avarice were represented, and to each man William promised his heart's desire.

At the outset of his quarrel William, careful to omit nothing that would add strength to the support of his claim, had not only made known

in all Catholic Europe what he deemed Harold's bad faith and iniquity, but had sent two of his Bishops to Rome to lay his own case before the Holy Father, well knowing that should he obtain Papal support, popular favour would declare with him against Harold. At that epoch the Popes were all powerful in state as well as spiritual affairs, the Holy See, the highest tribunal to which the differences of kings could be appealed. In his petition to Alexander II, who then occupied the Papal throne, William recalled his relationship to the dead king and Edward's intentions regarding England, in his behalf, and the unjust expulsion of Robert of Jumiège, from the See of Canterbury, through the influence of the house of Godwin; he told of Harold's treachery in seizing the crown of England, and the breaking of his Oath, the sacred oath sworn on holy relics, before witnesses at Bayeux.

Harold sent no ambassador to Rome to speak in his defence, and Alexander II, who knew in William a zealous and dutiful son of the Church, after considering the points at issue with his Cardinals in conclave, declared himself in favour of his cause; condemned Harold's perjury and want of good faith, and in a Pontifical Bull, excommunicated him, and all his adherents. To William the Pope sent as a mark of his special favour, a solemnly blessed standard, and a ring, set

with a diamond of great value which enclosed a hair of the Apostle Peter.

From this time onward the expedition for the conquest of England became a sort of Holy War, undertaken, as it were, with the sanction and approval of the Pope: ecclesiastical zeal received a new impulse, and not only men of the Church, but monks, for the good of their souls flocked to serve under the Duke's banner. Chapels and Abbeys, too, rivalled each other in contributing large sums for the righteous cause, Duke William making the State an exact list of these loans, as a title of recompense when the conquest of England should be complete.

The same success did not attend William's appeal at the Court of France, in residence at St. Germain-en-Laye, whither without entourage, or ceremony, he went in person to ask Philippe I for his support and assistance: "you are my Suzerain," he said to the young king, "and if it pleases you to assist me and God permits me to conquer England, I swear to do you homage for the realm, as if I held it of you." Philippe convoked a council of his principal nobles to consider the subject; their advice was against helping William. "You are not unaware," they said to the king, "how little the Normans respect your authority now; should they obtain

England they would render you even less obedience: to accord the Duke aid would be very burdensome to our country: and should he fail in his enterprise, the English nation would for ever be your enemy." The Regent, Count Baudouin of Flanders, was powerless to do what he might personally have desired toward helping his son-in-law; but through the weight of his influence, it was at last conceded that should William succeed in establishing himself on the English throne he would give Normandy to his eldest son Robert; and on this condition France promised to shut her eyes to his undertaking. Passive assistance was at least better than active opposition, and with the former William was fain to be content.

But other princes proved more zealous in espousing William's cause; the Counts of Boulogne and Ponthieu allied themselves with Normandy; and Eudes, Count de Nantes, Duke of Brittany, pursuing quite a different policy to that of his predecessor, William's old enemy Conan II, not only did the same, but sent a corps of men of arms under the command of his two sons, one of whom, Alain Fergant, later married the Duke's daughter Constance, to serve under his banner. Other rich Bretons, the Seigneurs of Dinan, of Vitré, of Château-Giron, and others, were equally anxious to follow William

in his expedition across the sea. Henri IV, Emperor of Germany, not only enlisted the services of his vassals, but promised to take Normandy under his protection during the absence of its ruler.

The preparations for the expedition which William meanwhile had pressed steadily forward from now on advanced with a new activity, and the ardour of their chief was seemingly shared by even the humblest workman: the woods re-echoed the felling of trees, timber-yards were filled with vessels in the course of construction; carpenters and sailors worked without ceasing; hammers resounded on the anvils; and the frequent clash of lance and spear told of practice among the newly recruited troops: strangers filled the inns, and itinerant merchants, eager to furnish what they might toward the general equipment, obstructed the streets with their wares; in short, excitement, noise, tumult and activity prevailed on every side.

By a unanimous vote of the Council Mathilde was chosen to act as Regent during her husband's absence from Normandy; the eldest son, Robert, a youth in his teens and nominally military chief in the Duchy, being associated with his mother in the government; Roger de Beaumont, the Duke's old and valued friend, not so active in body as in the days of William's youth, but

Type of wine, or cider, barrels in general use in Normandy to-day, and similar in shape to those used at the time of the Conquest, as depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry

Photo. by the Author

Panel from the Bayeux Tapestry, Tostain Librairie, Bayeussine

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fertile of mind and keen of judgment as ever, was appointed minister.

There was no one in Rouen more actively employed in furthering William's interests in a practical way than Mathilde; and in the midst of the general confusion she alone maintained an appearance of great serenity. Arising at an early hour each day, as was then the custom no matter how exalted the rank, she devoted the greater part of the morning in gaining a knowledge of affairs, the burden of which would necessarily soon fall upon her; she superintended, too, the construction of a vessel, the "Mora", destined to bear her husband to England; her personal gift to him, the costs defrayed from her own private purse. But the management of her household was not neglected in the public affairs of the moment, and when the Ducal family united together for the evening meal, Mathilde presided at the repast, every detail of which she, herself, had arranged with "Wadard', represented in the Bayeux tapestry as the chief steward of the court.

Mathilde's tact, too, was often brought into play at this time to preserve harmony between Duke William and young Robert, for even then the seeds of dissension, which later grew into open rebellion on the latter's part, were plainly manifest between father and son.

At last the day fixed for the departure of the army from Rouen arrived and when Duke William and his host, amid the blare of trumpets, passed out of the city there were not many of strength and manhood left behind, of women to weep, not a few.

William's principal commanders were Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, Eustache, Count of Boulogne, Aimery de Thouars, Guillaume d'Erreux, Hugues d'Estaples, Geoffrey de Rotou, Roger de Beaumont, Charles-Martel, Geoffrey Giffard, Roger de Montgommeri, Hugues de Grantmesnil, Guillaume d'Aubesmare, and Guillaume de la Varennes, and there was not one among them who did not set out with the surety of obtaining that which most flattered his secret desire; for William had studied his commanders, their characteristics, aims and ambitions; to some he had promised employment, advancement, and honours, to others riches and a life of ease.

William had chosen Dives, at the mouth of the river of the same name, as his place of reunion, and at the end of August, 1066, his force consisting of "400 vessals à grande voilure, and more than 1,000 transport boats and 50,000 men,[1] soldiers,

[1] Simonde de Sismondi affirms that in all probability the Duke's army consisted of about half that number of men—the exaggeration being made on the part of the Normans to inspire terror, and on the part of the English to account for their defeat.

and sailors, awaited with much impatience a favourable moment to leave port". Contrary winds prolonged the expectancy a month and during the entire time "William abundantly supplied the needs of his vast multitude, and so strictly forbade all pillage, that the cattle could graze in the fields in safety, and the ripening harvest awaited the labourer's scythe, not having been trampled upon by the haughtily careless knights, nor ravaged by the forager: and the man, frail, or without weapons, went his way at will, on horse back, singing; he saw the war-like troops, but had no fear."

The harbour of Dives, which once sheltered the fleet which set forth with the conquerors of England, has, in the course of succeeding centuries, been blocked up by the shifting sands of time; a few fishing smacks at best can now alone find anchorage and safety there. But upon the little old Normandy town, set in a background of wooded hills by the sea, William has left the imprint of his own strong and forceful personality. It matters not that Kings have lodged at Dives,[1] and that men and women of note have stayed there, for the interest to-day, although nearly nine hundred years have passed away since

[1] Henry IV, Louis XI, Louis XIII, and Dumas, George Sand, Daubigny, Troyon, and Mme. de Sevigné are numbered among Dives' illustrious visitors. The latter mentions Dives in her letters.

William's time, must here needs centre almost solely in him and the momentous undertaking which resulted in England's conquest by the Normans. On every hand there is some reminder of Normandy's greatest Duke. The village Church retains its massive early-Norman arches, and the names of those who, with William, set sail for England have in more modern times been inscribed upon its portal: a column on a commanding height above the town commemorates the glory of Guillaume le Bâtard, surnamed le Conquérant. The inn too, one of the quaintest and most interesting in Normandy, the oldest parts of which tradition ascribes to William's time, is known by his Gallic name, Guillaume le Conquérant; and on the walls of the great hall are immortalized in fresco the names and arms of the principal knights in William's expedition. The salt marshes in the neighbourhood of Dives formed part of William's ducal appanage.

Toward the end of September a southerly wind favoured the fleet's departure from Dives, and bore it as far as St. Valery-sur-Somme, where, forced by the violence of a gale to seek shelter, it again cast anchor. Several vessels were lost in transit, and the bodies and wreckage cast by the tide upon the shore produced consternation and uneasiness among William's

followers. Discouragement and uneasiness replaced the enthusiasm of the departure. Days of inaction in camp upon the shore followed the continued bad weather, and in spite of augmented rations, both food and "strong drink", and William's admonition to be of good cheer, many openly gave way to despondency and complaint. "Rash and fool-hardy is the Duke," they said to one another, "to wish to seize a strange kingdom, when God, who controls the wind, does not send that of the South to carry him to England; the undertaking cannot but be disastrous to the Normans, as God is against them." Some recalled too, that in the old days Duke Robert, championing the cause of his exiled nephews, the Saxon princes, Alfred and Edward, assembled a fleet to carry them to England, and that it had been disbanded, and the projected expedition in their favour brought to naught by the very elements now warring against Duke Robert's son. "William, himself, was frequently seen in the Church at St. Valery in prayer, and each time, as he came out from his devotions, he looked at the cock on the top of the belfry which showed the direction of the wind: if it appeared to turn toward the south the Duke seemed jubilant, but if it turned toward the north, or west, his face fell and his countenance was sad." But although at heart prey to an

uneasiness he could scarce conceal, neither adverse winds, shipwreck, complaints, nor the stealthy desertion of some of those who had sworn to serve him, lessened William's sublime courage. He redoubled his care of the commisariat, and strove by constant exhortations to keep up the courage of those of his men who were beginning to shrink from the enterprise. Fearful too, lest the spirit of discontent now manifest should pervade the entire army, William sought to increase the confidence of his men and caused the shrine of St. Valery [1] to be carried with great ceremony throughout the camp; and the whole army prayed before it, invoking the saint's intercession for a favourable wind, their generosity equalling their piety: for 'tis said "the shrine was hidden with the pieces of money showered down as offerings by the worshippers".

That very night there was a sudden change, the gale lessened, and when morning broke the long desired wind blew from the south, Duke William being among the first to regard it as a heaven-sent miracle.

The same evening, September 29th, the feast of St. Michael Archangel, after a day of feverish excitement and preparation the fleet set sail for the open sea, and the sound of the trumpets

[1] A saint of Merovingian times, who had done much toward Christianizing the heathen lands of Northern Gaul.

could scarce be heard for the shouts of joy of the whole army, confident, and full of enthusiasm once more.

Duke William's ship, the "Mora", the gift of the Duchess led the way. "The sides of the vessel were gilded; on her glittering sails were painted the leopards of Normandy: the carved figure of a boy adorned the prow, his left hand holding an ivory trumpet, the right seemingly pointed toward the English shore! The Pope's banner, white embroidered in blue and topped with a golden cross, floated aloft from the main-mast."

William gave orders by the mouth of his herald that the ships on gaining the high sea were to keep as close together as might be, and a lantern gleaming from the top-mast of the "Mora" during the night was to serve as a beacon-light for the other boats to follow.

In Wace's words,

> "Une lanterne fist li Dus
> Metre en sa nef el mast de sus
> . . . Une wire—wire dorée
> Ont de coivre en somet levée . . ."

But during the night the "Mora", "sailing with more ardour toward victory," far outstripped the other boats, more heavily laden, and encumbered with horses, and at day-break the

sailor sent aloft reported to the Duke "that there was nothing to be seen but sky and sea".

William immediately cast anchor; despite uneasiness assumed a confident mien; and lest the crew should give way to fear and despondency at the delay, ordered a bountiful repast to be served, "at which even sweet wine was not lacking," he himself partaking thereof with memorable cheerfulness, assuring his people meanwhile that they would soon see the rest of the fleet appear, guided thither by the Hand of God, under whose protection he had placed himself.

Once again the sailor was sent aloft, and this time announced he saw four vessels approaching; a little later exclaiming with joy, "Behold! a forest of masts draws near."

CHAPTER VII

King Harold summoned to Northumbria by the arrival of the Norwegians—cause of Tostig's quarrel with his brother Harold—William's pleasantry with Count Baudouin of Flanders—Battle of Stamford Bridge—the unopposed landing of the Normans in England—Camps established at both Pevensey and Hastings—Duke William with twenty-five knights reconnoitres the surrounding country—A warning message sent William by one of his countrymen living in London—William's answer—Harold hurriedly leaves York for the South—Sends spies from London to ascertain Norman strength and position—William tries anew a conciliatory policy with Harold—Unavailing—His brother's advice unheeded by Harold—The Saxons take up their position for battle near Hastings.

CHAPTER VII

De même que la mer, qui ne se repose jamais avec une certaine solidité, mais toujours plus ou moins agitée se trouble et demeure toujours en mouvement, et, quoi-qu'elle paraisse quelquefois tranquille aux yeux de ceux qui la contemplent, n'en épouvante pas moins les navigateurs par des fluctuations et son instabilité naturelle, de même, le siécle présent est constamment tourmenté de son inconstance, et varié sans cesse dans ses innombrables alternatives d'infortune et de bonheur.

Orderic Vital.

King Harold, meanwhile, was not on hand to repel the landing of his redoubtable foe.

During the summer 'tis true the Saxon King had watched and waited in the southern part of England for the coming of the Normans, but now, at what proved to be a most critical time, deeming himself safe for the winter months at least from their invasion, Harold had left the coast unguarded, and with his troops hurried to the north where an urgent peril threatened his kingdom. For the same wind which detained the Normans so long in port had been equally successful in blowing another enemy to the English shores, and Northumbria had fallen into the power of the Norwegians.

Led by their daring King, Harold-Hardrada, and the Saxon Harold's own elder brother Tostig, these fierce warriors of the North had landed at the mouth of the Humber, and crushed the forces hastily organised by the Earl of Northumbria to repel them, had ravaged and pillaged the country-side without mercy and were even now before the city of York.

Tostig, for a time, during Edward the Confessor's reign, had himself governed Northumbria, but in 1064 the people, grown tired of his rule of cruelty and oppression, had arisen en masse and driven him out of the country. Obtaining no support from Harold, who on the contrary was among the first to blame him for what is said to have been his injustice and tyranny, Tostig left England with a heart full of bitterness and hatred toward his brother and his country, an enemy alike implacable and bold.

In Flanders, Tostig found a friend in Count Baudouin, one of whose daughters he had married, and when the quarrel broke between Duke William and the Saxon King, Baudouin, anxious to further his Norman son-in-law's cause by embarrassing Harold's movements at home, glady contributed both money and ships to the exiled prince for an expedition of revenge in England.

It was indeed generous in Count Baudouin to

thus materially assist the Duke of Normandy's cause, for at the outset of the quarrel with Harold, when Count Baudouin in a bantering way asked William what advantage would accrue to Flanders should he help him to conquer England, William, irritated that as Regent of France, his father-in-law had not secured him more substantial assistance there, replied by sending him a parchment in the form of a letter sealed with the Ducal seal :—

" Beau Sire, en Angleterre, aurez,
Ce que dedans vous trouverez."

On opening the missive, the parchment proved to be blank, and although a joke quite in the style of the time, an inordinate love of sportive raillery being a strong Norman characteristic, and one which the Count of Flanders had himself provoked, he resented it at first so keenly that it required all the diplomacy of Hugues de Grantemenil, who was William's messenger, to appease Count Baudouin's wrath.

Tostig, with his newly acquired fleet had repaired to Norway, where he found a poet and pirate King, Harold Hardrada, son of Sigurd, who loved to sail afar " his great ship, terror of husbandmen, his black ship filled with warriors ". Love of adventure and hope in England's unsettled state of material gain, together with honeyed words of flattery on Tostig's part, made Hardrada

eagerly embrace Tostig's quarrel. "The world knows," Tostig said to the Scandinavian, "that there is no warrior worthy to be compared to thee; thou hast only to desire it and England is thine!"

The unexpected arrival of King Harold and his troops from the south drove the Norwegian invaders from the gates of York, which were about to open to admit them, and the Norse King withdrew to Stamford Bridge, a favourable situation for battle. There he seemed to have little to fear from an attack, for the ocean with ships and safety was back of him, the Derwent on his right, the Humber on his left. Hardrada disposed his warriors for battle, closely pressed in a semi-circle about his unfurled standard, well named "The Ravager of the World", and a line of lances driven in the earth, the points bent towards the enemy, served as a bulwark.

The Norwegian King, arrayed in an azure mantle, and on his head a glittering helmet, mounted a superb black horse. As he rode along the lines it fell. "Who then is the captain thrown to earth," exclaimed King Harold. "It is Hardrada," he was told. "Hardrada is a brave warrior," the Saxon King replied, "but this fall seems to announce that his hour is at hand."

Before giving battle, King Harold by an envoy offered his brother peace, pardon, and his

old honours. "This proposition might have been made me many months since," replied Tostig, "but if I accept it what doest thy master reserve for the most noble Harold Hardrada, son of Sigurd?

"Seven feet of earth for his grave," replied the messenger, "or a bit more, for he is taller than other men."

"Tell my brother," exclaimed Tostig with wrath, "to prepare for battle, for a coward only would abandon his ally."

Side by side the Norwegian King and Tostig opposed the latter's brother at Stamford Bridge, and after Hardrada fell, mortally wounded, Tostig alone, rejecting anew his brother's proffers of peace, led the Norwegian army toward the victory he desired, but did not gain. In vain its intrepid courage; in vain the individual acts of heroic valour—the invaders were forced to give way before the determined onslaught of the English, the rout of their army in the end was complete, and not only Harold Hardrada, but Tostig were among those slain on the field of battle.

The same day, September 29th, that King Harold, flushed with triumph and laden with the spoils of his enemy, amid the acclamations of the inhabitants entered York to give his victorious troops a much needed rest, the Norman fleet

appeared off the Sussex coast. No one disputed its passage, for the English boats after weeks of vigil, had dispersed for supplies, and on the shores of Pevensey Bay, where the troops disembarked, the inhabitants fled with terror at the sight of the invading host. "Then landed first the archers dressed in smocks and cropped about the ears, then came the knights all in their helmets and harness ready for battle; then the baggage, horses, provisions, and all public property were put on shore; then followed carpenters, masons and other workmen, with three fortress' of wood, all ready to set up upon the ground." Duke William was the last to disembark. As he stepped upon the shore his foot slipped, and he fell forward, his two hands outstretched upon the shingly beach.

"God save us, this is a bad omen," cried those about him in alarm.

"What say you," exclaimed William quickly, as he arose. "Know that thus I have seized this land with my hands, and by God's help and yours I shall conquer it. By the splendour of God it is mine; it is yours."

Then one of the cavaliers, expressing as it were the confidence inspired anew by their leader's ready and ingenious retort, ran to a near-by cottage, and taking a handful of thatch from the roof brought it to William, and said, "Sire, je

vous baille la saisine de cette terre, et de ce royaume, et je vous promets que, ancois qu'il soyt ung moys, je vous en verrai seigneur."

A strong camp was immediately established on the shore, and one of the wooden forts brought from Normandy in fitted sections was set up on a hill within the sea-washed walls of the Roman ruins of Anderida, for its defence. This temporary fort, later replaced by one of stone, formed part of the large possessions in Sussex William bestowed upon his half-brother, Robert, Earl of Mortain. In those days the sea, now a mile distant, came up to the very castle walls, and Pevensey itself was one of the chief ports of connection with the continent.

Another camp similarly protected was made some ten miles distant at Hastings and, garrisoned by a force of picked men, was designed by William to provide if necessary a base of retreat.

Minute and delightful details in the Bayeux tapestry show how peaceful and orderly was the landing of the Norman invaders; horsemen galloped without let or hindrance into the country in search of provisions which the abandoned homes yielded in plenty, cattle were slaughtered for a feast, and cooks and serving-men under "Wadard" fulfilled, as if in their own land, their several duties with dispatch and order. William is depicted with Bishop Odo at his side,

his principal knights about him feasting at table, and from the chronicles we learn that the wit and gaiety at the repast even exceeded the good cheer !

Leaving his army at Pevensey to dig a moat about the " Castle ", and to provision and further strengthen the camp against attack, William himself with but twenty-five chosen knights set out to make a reconnaisance of the surrounding country. " About him stretched a vast and well-nigh deserted wilderness, for with wives and children, and hastily gathered together flocks, the Saxons had ignominously fled to church and monastery for sheltered safety." As the sea was left behind there were no paths nor ways to follow, and the little band of Normans, forced to dismount, penetrated and explored on foot the solitude about them. " Duke William, stronger of body and purpose than those who followed him, but laughed at the hardships, and although the reader may also laugh at it, he deserves our earnest praise for carrying on his shoulders to relieve his companion of the iron weight, attached to his own cuirass that of Guillaume Fitz-Osbern : a knight nevertheless renowned for his strength and courage."

William's discipline and orders forbidding pillage and violence, were, as ever, strict ; the punishment meted offenders severe. But in such

an innumerable concourse of men of all conditions composing his army there were of necessity some, who impatient and "eager for gain", scattered in bands far away from camp, to plunder and destroy at will, "à peine débarqués sur la terre etrangère, ils traitaient l'Angleterre en pays conquis."

At Pevensey William was apprised by a Norman living in London, the very same perhaps who had sent him the news of Harold's accession, of all that had taken place in the North: "King Harold," the message ran, "has just given battle to his own brother, and to the King of Norway, who passed for the strongest warrior under heaven; he slew both in battle and has destroyed their large army. Animated by this success he advances speedily towards thee at the head of an innumerable force, full of strength, against which yours has but the value of yelping curs. Thou passest for a wise man, and until now hast behaved with prudence, whether in peace or war. Strive now to provide for thy safety; take care lest thy temerity precipitate thee into a danger from which thou canst not retire. I counsel thee to remain in thy retrenchments, and refrain from coming into Harold's hands at present, because in four days the son of Godwin will have a hundred thousand warriors with him."

William bade the messenger acknowledge

with appreciation his countryman's words of warning, adding characteristically, "I do not wish to shelter myself in a fortified retreat; I shall engage Harold as quickly as possible, and should not hesitate unless the Divine will opposed it, had I but ten thousand men instead of the sixty thousand warriors of strength which I have brought with me to crush him, and his."

Harold, meanwhile, on learning of the arrival of William and his Normans in England, hastily left York, where he was celebrating his recent victory, the victory which in a large measure was the cause of his subsequent defeat at Norman hands, and repaired to London. His troops, fatigued by long marches, and the combat with the Norwegians, followed after their chief more slowly. King Harold was elated at his recent success, but among his followers this feeling was largely tempered by a secret resentment at his lack of generosity in dividing the Norwegian booty.

For six days King Harold was forced to remain in his capital to recruit anew the decimated ranks of his army, and from London seeking to gain knowledge from afar of his enemy, he sent spies to discover the strength and position of the Normans. Detected, and seized, the Saxons were taken to Duke William, who only too glad of the chance of letting Harold know of his

great strength, ordered the spies to be shown freely about the camp, and then, after testing Norman hospitality, sent back safe and sound to their master to tell of what they had seen.

"The aspect of the Norman army is formidable," they reported to the king, "but it seems to be composed entirely of priests, for we saw only men with shaven faces."

King Harold smiled at the credulity of his men, and said "those whom you found in such great numbers are not priests, but brave warriors who will soon prove their valour".

Duke William, on his part, resolved before resorting to arms to essay anew with Harold the conciliatory policy he had adopted at the outset of the quarrel. With this in view he sent an envoy, Hugues Maigrot, a monk from the abbey of Fécamp, to his rival to summon the Saxon king to respect the memory of his sacred oath, and yield him the crown as he had promised. Else do one of two things: remit their differences to the judgment of the Pope, or decide the quarrel by single combat in the sight of each army, and thus spare the shedding of innocent blood of both nations.

Pale with anger on receiving William's bold challenge, Harold remained for a time silent as if sunk in thought and then at length, urged by the messenger to give a response, cried

wrathfully, "We set forth at once; we march to give battle," adding as he raised his face towards heaven, "it is for God alone to decide between the Duke and me, He alone shall be our arbiter."

Undeterred by Harold's uncompromising attitude, and positive words of refusal, back again to the charge William sent his messenger. "Say to King Harold," he instructed the monk, "that if he will keep to his old pact with me, I will leave him all the country which lies beyond the river Humber, and that I will give to his brother Gurth all the land which Earl Godwin held. Should he still obstinately refuse to accept that which I offer, thou shalt say to him before all his people, that he is a perjurer and a liar, and that he and his adherents are excommunicated in a Papal Bull which I hold."

William's audacious words of insult, for the first part of Hugues Maigrot's mission had as before been a failure, rendered the Saxon nobles grouped about their king for the moment speechless, and then one of them cried hotly:—

"It is not a question here of a new lord to be received, as if our king were dead: it has to do with other things!"

"The Duke of Normandy has already given our land to his barons, to his knights, to all his people and most of them have already rendered

him homage for it ; all would have their ' don ' if the Duke should become our King . . . He has not come alone to ruin us, but also to ruin our descendants, and to take from us the home of our ancestors : what should we do, and where should we go had we no longer any country ? " Then all present swore with a mighty and unanimous oath, to grant neither peace, nor truce, nor treat further with the invaders but to drive them out of England, or perish in the attempt.

Time had been but wasted in these useless negotiations, and the hour of conflict, which would decide England's fate, was now at hand.

Harold's depleted army had each day been reinforced by volunteers, nobles, commoners and peasants from the fields, each alike anxious to do their share towards repelling the invaders from across the sea. Even monks armed in haste and came from their monasteries to respond to their country's need ; but fewer in numbers and less seasoned in battle, Harold's undisciplined troops although lacking neither bravery nor courage, were inferior to the Norman warriors they soon perforce must face.

Edwin and Morcar, the two most powerful chieftains of the North, had not yet come to the support of the King, but Harold's young brothers, Gurth and Leofwin, were at his side.

They counselled delay in giving battle, and supported in this by most of the Saxon nobles, even urged the policy of forcing the Normans to pass the winter in England, cutting off at the same time their base of supplies, and harassing them at every opportunity, in the belief that all Britons who were faithful to their duty and jealous of their liberty, no matter of what party, would in the end flock to Harold's standard and by their superior force intimidate or crush the invaders.

Finding that these arguments made no impression on Harold, his brothers begged him at least not to command the army in person. "Harold," said Gurth, "thou canst not deny that, whether by force or inclination thou hast sworn fidelity, on sacred relics, to Duke William. Why dost thou then risk battle with perjury against thee? We have promised nothing; our war is just, for we defend our country; let us then give battle without thee; thy cause will be the better for it; if we give way, thou wilt bring us back to battle; if we die, thou wilt avenge us!"

All was useless. Harold declared that having won the esteem of the nation he would not risk forfeiting it now by turning his back to the enemy or taking precautionary measures for his own safety.

Full of courage; impatient of delay; and, as

if urged on by a relentless Fate, Harold would not even await further reinforcements, but assembled his troops and hoping to surprise the Normans whom he did not consider more terrible adversaries than the men of the North just vanquished, marched rapidly towards William's camp.

Duke William apprised by his cavalry scouts of the enemy's approach was on his guard; his men under arms; and Harold not daring to risk an immediate attack with troops already fatigued by a long march, took up his position, the most advantageous one in the vicinity, on the top of a chain of low-lying hills a few miles north-west of Hastings. There Harold hastily fortified himself against attack, with a triple barricade of rocks and screens made of osier branches; the machines for hurling stones in the enemy's midst were arranged to the best advantage, and Harold's troops, who like himself fought on foot, were prepared to wield the two-handled battle-axe, a terrible weapon with a five foot blade no coat of mail nor shield could withstand at close range, with effective power.

King Harold's own standard, adorned with the famous "Fighting Man" wrought in gold and ornamented with jewels, and the "Dragon" of Wessex floated from above the crest of the hill; beneath their ensigns the Saxon king and his

brothers Gurth and Leofwin, with their " house-earls " about them, took their places.

As the day was now far advanced with no time ere nightfall for battle, the conflict, as if by mutual consent, was postponed to the morrow, and each army spent the night preparing in its own way for the great struggle.

CHAPTER VIII

The two armies spend the night before battle, each in a different way—Duke William attends Mass at daybreak, and dons his armour—He arranges his army in battle-array—Addresses his warriors before setting forth—The two armies face one another, Saturday, October 14th, 1066—The jongleur Taillefer opens the combat—The Saxons secure on the Senlac heights repulse the Normans—Rout of the Norman left wing—William, undaunted, by force and valour prevents further disaster—William's personal heroism —That of his followers—The Duke essays stratagem with the Saxons—Successful—The Normans gain the hill—The terrible last struggle on the height—Harold's death—Defeat and flight of the Saxons—William kneels on the battlefield and thanks God for the victory—He vows to build an abbey on the Senlac Hill—Next day a roll is called of all the Norman Seigneurs who set sail from Normandy with William—The list—The dead of both nations given proper burial—William refuses to give Harold's remains to his mother, the Countess Githa—Later grants permission to the Monks of Waltham Abbey to bury Harold in the Abbey Church—Harold's body found only after long and tireless effort—The chronicler of Ely writes bitterly of the day of battle—Norman historians chronicle the events with joy—Battle Abbey.

CHAPTER VIII

La Fortune inconstante amène souvent aux mortels des événemens terrible et inattendus ; quelques hommes s'élancent du sein de la poussière au somment de la plus grande puissance, tandis que d'autres, précipités du faîte des grandeurs, gémissent dans l'adversité.

Orderic Vital.

The Saxons, as was their custom, spent the night before battle drinking and carousing around the camp fires ; singing meanwhile their old national airs, as if already assured, and celebrating a victory.

The Normans, on their side, less debauched and better disciplined, passed the time in religious as well as military preparation ; they chanted prayers, confessed their sins and many, praying that Heaven would grant success to their arms, received the Blessed Sacrament.

Duke William, after a night of surveillance and vigil, himself set a pious example, and as day broke assisted at the Mass celebrated by his half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux ; a soldier as well as a priest for the nonce, his coat of mail but covered by the pontifical robes of his sacred office. At the conclusion of the service Bishop Odo bestowed a blessing upon the entire army, and exhorted

all present to repeat after him a short but fervent prayer to God for victory, or their souls' repose that day ; adding a vow that if spared none would hereafter eat meat on the anniversary of the battle.[1]

The Duke, around whose neck, on chains of gold, hung the most venerable of those relics, whose protection Harold was denied by his violated faith, now called for his arms, and in the haste of donning them, the hauberk, or coat of mail, was turned hindside before. His entourage, seeing in it but a presage of ill omen, were dismayed, but not so William, who with a laugh corrected the mistake, saying, " Thus shall the power of my Dukedom be changed into a Kingdom."

Mounting a superb " destrier ", or battle horse of well known blood and pedigree, the gift of his ally, King Alfonso, and brought him from Spain by a rich Norman, Count de Longueville, on his return from a pilgrimage to St. Iago de Compostella, William arranged his army in battle-array.

There were three lines. The first one, commanded by Roger de Montgomery and Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, was composed of light infantry, men

[1] Miss Strickland relates in her " Queens of England " that this obligation was observed by many Catholics in England as late as the beginning of the 19th century.

of Ponthieu and Boulogne, and adventurers in the Duke's pay, archers for the most part, all armed with bow and arrow, or the formidable arbalète. In the spaces between the battalions were swivel guns, that stones as well as arrows might be used to open the attack; the second division, battalions of heavy infantry formed of men from Anjou, Brittany, Poitou and Maine, "all in their helmets and harness," was led by Geoffroi Martel, Count d'Anjou. Norman cavalry, the hope and pride of the army, commanded by the Duke himself, made the third line; archers in extended formation, forming two wings, were designed by the Duke to protect each column of attack.

Intense emotion, now that he was face to face with the great issue and its attendant possibilities, filled William's very being, and as if to communicate his enthusiasm, at least in part, to his followers, he addressed them before taking up the line of march; the heat of his ardour vibrating in every word he uttered. "It is now," he said, "that you should prove what courage animates you, with what strength your arms are endowed. It is no longer a question of living as masters, but of escaping alive from an imminent peril. If you fight like men you obtain victory, honour and riches. Otherwise you will be promptly slaughtered, or as captives serve as playthings

to the most cruel of enemies. Moreover you will be covered with eternal ignominy. There is no path open to retreat; on one side the arms of an unknown and hostile land bar the way; on the other the sea and arms again check flight. It is not the part of men to be frightened by numbers. The English have often yielded to the enemy's sword; many times vanquished, have fallen under the yoke of a stranger; never have they distinguished themselves by glorious feats of arms. With courage a small number of warriors may easily crush a large number of men inapt in war, especially when the cause of justice is protected by the help of Heaven. That naught may force you to give way, risk all, and soon victory will rejoice your hearts."

William took up his position, in the midst of a picked band of his own cavaliers, at a point from which he could easily give his command by voice or sign on all sides; a young knight, Toustain le Blanc, carrying the Pope's banner, rode at his side. As the army got under way, the monks and priests who had accompanied it, withdrew, and mounted a neighbouring hillock, to watch the battle and pray.

As the early mist cleared away on that autumn morning, October 14th, 1066, it revealed the two armies facing one another, both for some moments immovable, viz-à-vis; Harold realised, and was

determined not to lose, the advantage of his position on the heights of Senlac; William was equally cognisant of the difficulty of attacking the English in their position of strength.

A young Norman named Taillefer, a jongler as well as a valiant and skilful knight, made the first move. He urged his horse forward between the two armies, intoning meanwhile in a ringing voice the famous song of Roland and the dead Paladins of Roncevaux.[1] At each refrain, as if defying the enemy, he threw his sword into the air, catching it again in his right hand as it fell. And as he recounted each new exploit celebrated by the poet, the Norman warriors, inflamed with enthusiasm, again and again took up the chant; they called aloud their cri de guerre, "Dieu aide! Dieu aide!" and the clarion blast of trumpets on both sides signalled, as if by mutual consent, the preparation for combat. Taillefer, asking and obtaining from the Duke the honour of giving battle, spurred his horse furiously forward, chanting meanwhile, but the song soon died in his throat, his arm fell lifeless at his side, as with death he repaid the first blow struck, the mortal blow with which he felled a Saxon.

[1] It was during the defeat of Charlemagne's rearguard in the Pyrenees, on his return from Spain, the northern part of which he conquered in 778, that Roland, one of his knights, performed the deeds of valour celebrated in this great national French epic.

This marked the beginning of the general conflict.

The Saxons in a serried and compact mass on the hill-top sustained little damage to themselves from the cloud of arrows William's archers immediately let fly at them ; the arrow shafts, for the most part broken against the osier screens and barricades, falling harmlessly like rain on their interlaced and upturned shields ; stones, on the contrary, which they in turn sent crashing down from the height on their assailants, together with the havoc wrought by them at close range with battle axe and javelin, forced the Norman fantassins or foot soldiers to give way ; the cavalry sent to their aid were alike unsuccessful in gaining foothold or advantage.

Intrepid courage and bravery were lacking on neither one nor the other side ; again and again the Normans charged the hill only to be repulsed with loss by the Saxons, who as if fixed to the earth, tenaciously kept their compact formation ; and as rocks immovable in the ocean against which its billows dash with relentless fury, they held and could not be dislodged from their position of strength.

At one time the Breton cavalry and infantry recoiled before the destructive fury of the Saxon opposition, and the left wing of the Norman force was in full rout : " the foot soldiers and knights

turned their backs, almost all the Duke's army gave way, and this be it said without offence to the Normans, of nations the most invincible!" The rumour spread that the Duke himself was slain, an error that might well have cost the Normans victory had not William with all the fury of fight which glowed in his Northman's blood precipitated himself in front of the fugitives, striking and menacing right and left with his lance as he rode among them; he lifted his helmet that all might see and recognise his face, and he cried aloud with might and passion: "Look at me all, I live! and with God's help I will conquer yet. What insanity drives you to flight? What road opens to retreat? You let yourselves be repulsed and killed by those whom you can slaughter like cattle. You abandon victory and eternal glory, and pursue perpetual ruin and infamy. If you fly, not one will escape death!"

William's voice and presence brought his men back to combat; they rallied, turned, and throwing themselves with impetuosity upon a body of Saxons who had rashly left the Senlac height in pursuit of the fugitives, cut them to pieces; from among them none regained their trenches, and no quarter given, few if any escaped alive the terrible carnage.

It was in vain that those watching over the

Duke begged him during the course of the day's battle to think more of his own safety; he was ever where the fight raged most fiercely; he seemed to seek peril and as if endowed with the power of being in several places at the same moment, was always where his presence was most needed to encourage his people, his voice to command, his arm to fight, to resist, to kill, to spread about him death and consternation. Three horses were killed under William during the action, and as many times he sprang from the ground and quickly avenged the death of his charger. He called to his men to follow far oftener than he ordered an advance, and was ever on hand to share with them a common danger. His swift sword of steel pierced with fury buckler, helmet and cuirass alike; with his shield he smote down warriors, and it was the strength of his arm, as much as the force of his spirit, that led his warriors onward to victory.

And not behind their leader in valour were many of William's followers; his brother, Bishop Odo, immortalised in the Bayeux tapestry as undaunted in the very thick of battle, perhaps heads the list. Regardless of his own peril, without shield or buckler, mace in hand, he encouraged by voice and example the younger knights who would feign turn aside from the avalanche of blows raining down upon them, knights whose

very youth made them less bold and ready in combat than the older and more seasoned warriors in William's train. But the doughty Bishop's encouragement was not needed in the case of Robert de Beaumont, son of the famous Roger de Beaumont, who at Duchess Mathilde's side in Normandy was now with her guarding the Duke's interests there, for young Beaumont, although in battle for the first time that day, repeatedly led the legion he commanded in the right wing, with unexampled boldness and courage against the enemy to their destruction, and the perpetual glory of his own renown.

The tradition is handed down that in the very height of conflict that memorable day, Duke William, who was as ever ready to reward valour as to censure the lack of it, impulsively tore a scarf from his own neck and bestowed it upon one of his knights, FitzWilliam by name, in immediate recognition of an act of great bravery on his part.[1] Guillaume, Count d'Evreux, Geoffroi, Count de Mortagne, Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, Hugues de Grantmenil, and Haimeric, Seigneur de Troarn, are among those mentioned at length in the chronicles as deserving remembrance for their valorous deeds, and but one is

[1] This scarf is a treasured possession of the FitzWilliam family, and has been used at the christening of the FitzWilliam heir for many generations.

spoken of as more anxious for his own personal safety than the glory of Norman arms ; and he, Eustache, Count de Boulogne, was struck down by one of the enemy with a mortal blow while at the Duke's side, counselling and urging upon his chief the necessity of retreat.

The day wore on ; the main body of the Saxons tenaciously held their position on the height, their lines, " en tortue," still unbroken ; and the Normans, aggressive and persistent as their tactics were, could count but one lasting advantage to their arms, and that, as seen, followed after the rout of the Bretons on the left wing, with the destruction of the band of Saxons in their pursuit.

It was plain to William that it was absolutely necessary to gain a foothold on the Senlac Hill, break the Saxon formation, and force, on more equal terms, a fight at close range. On the hill-top alone lay victory or defeat ; to gain the former he resolved to resort to stratagem.

Now if the issues at stake were great, so were the means chosen by William to attain his end thwart with great peril to the Normans ; a thousand cavaliers were ordered to attack the Saxons in their stronghold, to recoil before the enemy's resistance and as if in panic feign retreat in disorder. In each division, and all, Bretons, Angevins, men of Picardie, and Normans alike

fought under their own ensigns, together with the part they were to play. William assigned a special post, and as a precautionary measure, Bishop Odo and other ecclesiastics, valiantly in the army's midst to encourage the living and administer the last sacred offices of their calling to those in death, were charged by the Duke to make known on all sides, "à grand cris," that none should take alarm at any given order, however strange, that all emanated from his counsel and were given under his command.

The designed move was indeed a delicate as well as a dangerous one: simulated flight might easily at the crucial moment become real rout, which, if encompassing the whole army, would sweep it, in spite of its leader's purpose, onward to actual and lasting defeat.

But twice was the Norman ruse successful, the serried ranks on the hill-top opened little by little and at the third onslaught, believing the entire Norman army in retreat before them, the Saxons with shouts of joy, impetuously broke their lines, and with their battle-axes swinging from their necks that their arms might be freer to wield their weapons, rushed down the slope to give battle to the enemy on the plain below.

At a given point, as had been William's command, the Norman cavalry augmented by another corps kept in reserve for the purpose,

suddenly turned volte face on their pursuers, in turn pursued, who surprised in their disorder and hotly assailed on all sides, sought valiantly to win their way back to the cover of the trenches they had unwisely, and as some aver against orders, deserted. Struggling, combating, trampling and crushing under foot with little fear and no compassion, the Normans fought their way, and gained triumphant side by side with their adversaries the Senlac height. And there anew on the hill-top began a terrible and decisive hand to hand struggle for supremacy.

Both Harold and William were in the thick of the mêlée, inciting their followers by precept and example to deeds of heroism and valour; each side fought with desperation; of compromise there could be no hint; it was now a question only of either victory or annihilation.

About the royal standard, to the very foot of which the Normans penetrated, the battle raged most fiercely, and in defence of their ensign the Saxon princes Gurth and Leofwin, together with the flower of the English nobility, lost their lives. As long as Harold lived the final issue remained uncertain but as the shafts of the setting sun lit up and glowed for a moment on the hill-top and the Saxon king fell lifeless to the earth, his right eye pierced by an arrow, the Norman victory was assured—the Pope's banner

replaced the English standard on the Senlac height.

As Harold's body lay lifeless on the ground 'tis said a Norman struck and mutilated it with his spear, for which infamous act the warrior was degraded from his rank of knight by Duke William, and dismissed his service.

With the death of their leader, and the closing in of the night, consternation overtook the entire English force, and in flight they strove to escape the relentless fury of the Norman victors. Not without courage, nor individual acts of strenuous resistance to their adversaries' hurt, but as men in the entirety without leader or hope, they fled. Mounted, on foot, by roads and paths the most inaccessible, they sought, most oft in vain, their safety ; bathed in their life's blood, some essayed in vain to rise, others staggered to their feet, but to find themselves too weak to flee: the burning desire to save themselves gave others strength to attain their ends ; a vast number perished in the depths of the forests, others died by the wayside of their wounds and the very weariness of conflict ; thus Harold's followers dispersed and the Normans ever swift upon the heels of the fugitives, without pity, gave quarter to none.

" Even so," says the quaint old chronicler, Père Daniel, " was tried by the great assize of

God's judgment in battle the right of power between the English and Norman nations; a battle the most memorable of all others, and however miserably lost, yet most nobly fought on the part of England."

And there on the field of battle, the winning of which was his, in the midst of his assembled warriors, Duke William knelt, and with a heart full of joy and gratitude gave thanks to God for the victory with which He had crowned Norman arms that day: and there too, surrounded by his kneeling followers, William made a solemn vow to Heaven to build on the spot an abbey to be called "Bataille" which, dedicated to St. Martin the patron saint of Gallic soldiers, would serve as an enduring monument of Heaven's just reward and favour. The place where Harold, the last of the Saxon kings, had fallen was carefully marked, for by William's orders it was there the High Altar of the Abbey church was to be reared. "The Duke's tent was then pitched on the battle field, and he had his meat brought thither and his supper prepared, and he ate and drank among the dead and dying, and in their midst made his bed that night." But his repose could have been but brief, for most of the short interval of darkness William spent in and out among his people, felicitating, encouraging, and expressing by words and actions his appreciation

of their valour and devotion to his cause that day. At dawn, a Sunday morning, with the troops ranged about their leader, the roll was called after the list drawn up on the departure from Normandy of all the Seigneurs who had set sail with William, and as the tragic silence of an unanswered name revealed its owner fallen in battle, the Bishops offered prayers for his soul's repose, to which all present responded with fervent devotion.

The list from which the census was made is given by one Norman chronicler as follows :—

Odon, eveque de Bayeux.
Le sire de Mottagne ; ils etoient tous deux freres de Guillaume.
Le sire de Beaumont.
Guillaume Mallet.
Le sire de Montfort.
Henri, seigneur de Ferrières.
Le sire de Fougeires.
Guillaume d'Aubemare.
Guillaume de Roumare.
Le sire de Toucque.
Le sire de la Mare.
Neel de Saint-Sauveur.
Guillaume de Vieux-Pont.
Le sire de Beaufou.
Le sire de Manneville.
Le sire de Grosmenil.
Guillaume Crespin.
Le sire de Goui.
Le sire de l'Aigle.
Le sire de Touars.
Le sire de Trachi.
Le sire de Pecquigni.
Le sire de Torci.
Le sire de Barnaboc.
Le sire de Seaulme.
Le sire de Sanchoi.
Le sire de la Rivière.
Le seigneur de Roumilli.
Le sire du Sap.
Le sire de Branchou.
Le sire de Beausault.
Le sire de Seulis.
Le sire de Preaux.
De Longueville.
De Pacy.
De Colombières.
De Garencières.
De Houdetot.
De la Haie.
Le sire d'Yvetot.
Le comte de Tancarville.
Le comte d'Eu.
Le comte de Longueville.
Le sire de Rouville.

De Saint-Cler.
Le sire de Lafette.
Le sire de Laloude.
Le comte de Mortemer.
De Magny.
De Fontenay.
Le sire de Saint-Martain.
Guillaume de Moyenne.
Le sire Depuis.
Guillaume de Moulins.
Guillaume de Moulins.
Guillaume de Garennes.
Hugues de Gourne.
Le sire de Bray.
Le sire d'Avranchin.
Le sire de Vitry.
Le sire d'Espinay.
Hamon, sire de Pons.
Le sire d'Estouteville.
Le sire de Breval.
Le sire du Homme.
Le sire de Cailli.
Eudes de Beaujeu.
Le sire de Glos.
Le sire de Vauville.
Le sire de Bailleul.
Le sire de Tillères.
Le sire de Bacqueville.
Le sire de Jong.
D'Acquigny.
De Tournay.
De Bolebec.
De Longueil.
De Maletot.
De Malherbe.
De Porc-epiche.
Le comte d'Harcourt.
Le comte d'Arques.
Le comte de Nevers.
Le sire de Pavilly.
De Brametot.
Robert le fils Hermes, duc d'Orleans.
Le sire de Hugueville.
Roger de Montgommery.
Amauray de Touars.

The Norman dead were given proper burial, William granting the English permission to render the last like honours to their fallen warriors. Alone to Harold's mother, the Countess Githa, who surmounting her poignant grief came to ask for her son's body, offering, it is said, to give its weight in gold, William remained obdurate. "A man who had violated his faith and religion," he said grimly, "should have no other tomb than the sands of the shore, the coast he had defended so well during life he should continue to guard in death." Later, however, relenting, William

gave permission to the monks of Waltham Abbey, which Harold when living had built and richly endowed, to have the mortal remains of their benefactor for interment in the Abbey church. Two of the monks, Osgard and Ailrik, came to search for the body, but among the mass of dead and disfigured warriors, already despoiled of arms and clothing, strewn on the battle-field, the Saxon king could not be found. Disheartened after long and futile efforts, the monks at last gave up the search: then came a woman, Editha, "la belle au cour de cygne," who had long loved and been loved by Harold, and "whose tender attachment to the king was looked upon with general approval by the people and accepted without complaint by the queen". She, Editha, joined in the search, and faltered not in her gruesome task until at length she sank exhausted and overcome by grief beside the mutilated body of him she held so dear.

The incidents of the battle of Senlac or Hastings have naturally excited among the historians of the two nations distinctly varied and opposite feelings. The chronicler of Ely calls the day of battle "a bitter day, a day of death, a day stained with the blood of heroes; England, what shall I say of thee? What shall I relate to our descendants?—that thou hast lost thy national king, that thou hast fallen into a stranger's power,

that thy sons have perished miserably and that thy counsellors and chiefs are vanquished, dead or despoiled of their possession ! " The Normans on their side describe with pride the victory which in the end brought England under Norman domination, and in verse and song they celebrate the glory of the heroes who, led by Normandy's greatest Duke, fought and won the battle.

But well might William exclaim in sorrow as he surveyed the place of combat, silent witness of the carnage he could not see unmoved, the place of his triumph and his adversary's defeat, " ceci est vraiment la vallée de Sanguelac ! " [1]

When in pursuance of William's vow made on the battle-field, work was later begun on " La Bataille ", Battle Abbey, the Duke was told, at least so the story goes, that the site chosen was ill-favoured ; the hill-top barren and utterly destitute of water, " it matters not," he angrily retorted, " work away, work away, the spot is of my choosing, and if God spares my life I shall so amply provide for the place that there will be more good wine among the monks of ' Bataille ' than pure water in the best convent in Christendom."

Monks from the Benedictine Abbey of St. Martin in Marmontres, near Tours, were brought

[1] Senlac is generally supposed to be a corruption of the two words Sen—blood, lac—lake.

from across the sea to assist in the erection of the monastery, which, when completed, was to be the home of their order. And as stone, as well as water, was lacking in the neighbourhood of Senlac, that too was brought from across the water, at William's expense, from Caen in Normandy.

The monastery was planned on a magnificent scale; with the Abbey church its crowning glory.

There is a legend that William was told in a vision one night to build this church as many feet long as he desired his descendants to reign in England. "At dawn he arose and had the ground duly measured and staked out for a church 500 feet long; during the following night invisible hands were found to have removed the boundaries and reduced the dimensions to 315 feet. Thrice were the pegs replaced and as many times removed until William finally gave up in despair and accepted the new measurements!" In its reduced size, however, the minster, had it been preserved to our time, from its magnitude alone would have ranked with the grandest buildings of England.[1]

William designed that in this "Basilica", for

[1] "Unfortunately the only representation of the church is the somewhat rude one given on the Abbey seals, some of which are in the British Museum."

so it is often designated in the old chronicles, prayers should perpetually be chanted for the souls of those who had fallen in battle, and who by their "labour and valour" had helped to win the kingdom of England.

In 1538, at the time of the Dissolution in Henry VIII's reign, the Abbey Church in connection with other buildings used by monks for ecclesiastical purposes, was razed to the ground. A few buildings, forming the original part of the western square, the Abbot's lodge, the kitchen, refectory and hall, were left, and are still standing and in use to-day.

William endowed "La Bataille", "which was a token and pledge of his royal crown", with vast grants of land, not only in its immediate neighbourhood, but in other parts of England as well.

The Abbot, according to the original charter, was invested by William with unusual power. He held with almost royal prerogatives his own courts of justice and had the right to pardon any condemned criminal throughout England whom he might chance to meet: anyone guilty of theft or manslaughter, should he take refuge in the Abbey could receive no injury: "The Abbot was supreme in his own territory. He wore a mitre, carried a Bishop's crozier (but in his right hand) and was summoned to Parliament as a Baron. In London and Winchester town houses were

allotted him, and when at court at certain times in the year rations were provided for him from the Royal Household."

William, unfortunately, did not live to see the consecration of the Abbey church, which, owing so much to his munificence, took place in 1094, seven years after his own death. But his son and successor, William Rufus, was present and gave at the time the gifts his father had left by will to the Abbey: grants of additional lands, "the conqueror's sword, his coronation robe hung with more than 300 amulets of gold and silver enclosing relics of the saints and a jewelled feretory in the shape of an altar, also containing relics, on which William had been accustomed to have mass celebrated during his expedition."

CHAPTER IX

William leaves Hastings and makes his way to London—After much intrigue and dispute, Edgar Atheling elected King in Harold's stead by the Saxon Witenagemot—William surrounds London on all sides and forces it to capitulate—William accedes to the general wish and is crowned King of England at Westminster on Christmas Day, 1066—Mutual misunderstanding the cause of grave disorder at the coronation ceremony—William receives the submission of the Earls of Northumbria and Mercia—The estates of the English fallen at Hastings divided among the Normans—William sets sail from Pevensey to visit Normandy March, 1067—Bishop Odo and Guillaume Fitz-Osbern appointed joint Regents of England—Warmth of William's reception in Normandy—The Easter festival passed at Fécamp—The magnificence of William's equipage dazzles the visitors from France—William spends the summer, autumn, and part of the winter in his Duchy—Effect of Mathilde's wise rule during William's absence—La Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde—William at the hallowing of St. Pierre-sur-Dives—At Jumiège—His gifts to church and convent—The Regents' misrule in England—William returns there in haste.

CHAPTER IX

" Quiconque est chargé de tenir les rènes du government et de commander au peuple de Dieu, qui n'est-pas le même partant, doit ce montrer doux ou sévère comme la raison l'exige ; plein de douceur comme un agneau pour ceux qui sont bons, humbles et soumis ; sévère comme le lion pour les mechans les rebelles et les insolens."

Orderic Vital.

Shortly after the battle William left Hastings and proceeded along the coast to the south-east ; assured himself of this part of England, the necessary point of communication between his own land and the one, in spite of his recent victory he had still to conquer ; forced Dover, " the padlock and key of all England," to capitulate ; established there a strongly fortified base and marched onward to London, receiving en route, without so much as striking a blow, the submission of the city of Canterbury and the allegiance of the county of Kent.

Its path marked by fire and sword where subjection was not voluntarily forthcoming, the Norman army made its way and it was not long ere William was before the walls of the capital city, the city which not so many years before had received him with all the pomp and circumstance of a welcome visitor.

The remnant of the Saxon army had meanwhile gathered in London ; the Earls of Northumberland and Mercia hastening from the North had joined their vanquished countrymen with reinforcements, and the rich citizens of London, anxious for their homes and liberty, were not less slow in raising a large and formidable force of burghers to aid in the measures of defence taken against the foreign invaders.

It was even resolved to again give battle to the enemy.

But the foundation of Norman strength, unity and a leader, was lacking among the Saxons, who, divided in interests, had no one chief with the right and power to take command and make himself obeyed.

The deliberations of the Saxon Witenagemot, or Council of Wise Men, assembled to elect a King in Harold's stead were marked by factional intrigue and dispute ; the men of the North favoured one of their chieftains, Edwin or Morcar, brothers-in-law of the late King, brave, and worthy either of them to lead their countrymen in battle ; those of the south, and they were supported by the majority of the clergy and the citizens of London, were equally zealous in pressing the claims of Edgar Atheling, nephew of Edward the Confessor.

On Edgar the choice finally settled. He was,

it is true, the legitimate heir to the throne, the last prince of royal Saxon blood, but young, inexperienced, weak and indolent by nature, Edgar Atheling was possessed of far too limited vital force to be of service to his country in this time of great necessity.

His personality awakening no enthusiasm in the nation he was called upon to govern and lead against a common enemy, the accession of this puppet-king but signalled the loss of the realm.

William meanwhile did not pause nor delay action. He gradually encircled London on all sides and ravaged the outlying districts; sorties from the beset city were crushed and brought to nought by Norman troops ever on the alert; Southwark was given to the flames and the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages who held out against the invaders were terrorized into subjection.

At the first intimation that William would cut them off from their earldoms, the chiefs of Northumberland and Mercia retired to the north and withdrew from Edgar Atheling the support which they and their partisans, chagrined and disappointed at the Council's choice, had in a half-hearted way given the young King. Deserted thus by the ablest defenders, isolated within a network of the enemy's force, with small hope of succour reaching it from the outside, and face to

face with the spectre of starvation, London could not long hold out against William, whose policy was made good with the capitulation of the city.

Edgar Atheling himself, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, together with the principal prelates, thanes and citizens of London, presented themselves to him in camp at Berkhamstead, and there humbly and without condition made their submission; and with the oath of peace and fidelity rendered, with hostages delivered as pledge of their good faith; with assurances on William's part that he would neither be severe nor exacting, but ever "doux et clément" toward his new subjects, they offered the Norman Duke the crown of England.

It was William's first intention to press forward and complete the conquest of England before being crowned its King, that with tranquility established in the realm, Duchess Mathilde "might share with him his triumph". But with the proffer of the crown, William was begged by church dignitaries, many of whom having been educated at the famous abbey of Bec in Normandy were easily won over to his side, and others high in authority, not to put off nor delay his act of crowning. The English were accustomed to render obedience to a King, it was urged, and with an anointed King as master, the unrest and sedition now rife throughout the land might the

" William I receiving the Crown of England "

From an engraving after Benjamin West, P.R.A., forming the frontispiece to the folio edition of Rapin and Tindal's " History of England," published 1732 : in British Museum

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more readily give place to pacific and voluntary adhesion. "As to us," said his own followers when consulted, "your faithful Norman subjects, it was to procure our Prince the royal diadem that we exposed ourselves to so many dangers on land and sea." "We must not retard," exclaimed Viscount Aimery de Thouars, voicing the sentiments of his companions-in-arms, "by discussion that which we wish to see accomplished without delay."

After some hesitancy, either feigned or real on his part, William at last yielded to the general demand, and designated the day of coronation to coincide with the festival of Christmas, now close at hand.

The keys of London and the allegiance of its inhabitants having been given him, on Christmas Eve, with all the trappings of royalty, the Norman Duke entered the city in triumph and took up his abode at the palace of Blackfriars.[1] On Christmas morning William went by boat to London Bridge and then repaired to a house near London Stone,[2] and from thence at the appointed time proceeded to the Abbey Church of St. Peter, commonly called the West Minster.

[1] From *Crowns and Coronations*, by William Jones.

[2] A small fragment of the original London stone is preserved a few yards from where it first stood, close under the walls of St. Swithins. The stone it is conjectured dates back to the Roman occupancy.

Following the king-elect was a brilliant retinue, " priests, abbés, and the nobles of Albion mingled with the Normans who had crossed the sea to combat them " ; near to the person of the conqueror, next to the Norman standard and the Pope's banner, rode the chief English nobles and officers of State.

Norman troops, armed and on horseback, disposed about the Minster safeguarded and watched over the general security of their chief.

Great preparations had been made within the Abbey for the crowning, and it was decorated as had ever been the custom when the new monarch to be received was the free choice of the people of the land. But those within the church that memorable Christmas Day were not the first nobles of the realm gathered together to swear fealty to their chosen King, but the conqueror's war-lords and followers, together with those Saxons of London " who bowed to him for need ". All was in readiness ; the ampulla filled with the chrism or sacred oil, together with the spoon was laid ready on the altar, the regalia as used by William's royal predecessors, the sceptre with the dove, emblematic of Edward the Confessor's peaceful reign after the expulsion of the Danes, the gloves, a perpetual reminder of the abolition of the Danegeld, the curtana or sword of mercy without a point, and the golden spurs without

rowels, ending in ornamental points or pricks, all had been brought from the royal treasury to play each its significant and proper part in the day's ceremonial.

Electing not to use the crown of Edward the Confessor that but a scant twelve months since had encircled Harold's head, a new one had been prepared for William's crowning. As described by Guy, Bishop of Amiens, it was " made of gold brought from Arabia and rich with rare gems from the river Nile, a diadem admirably befitting the man ", and destined at the supreme moment to adorn the conqueror's brow with the sign of Kingship.

Of William's coronation robes there is no distinct record, but a mantle of state described in Anglo-Saxon documents as made of finest cloth, in colour a rich purple, embroidered in gold and silver and lined with costly fur, may be identical with the one hung with gold and silver ornaments enclosing relics of saints designated by William in his last testament as that worn at his coronation.

Eldred, Archbishop of York, " homme sage, bon et eloquent," was chosen by William to perform the act of consecration ; Stigand, to whom as Archbishop of Canterbury properly belonged the office of celebrant, but whose elevation to the primacy William considered

uncanonical, was assigned a place secondary in importance.

The ceremony [1] began by the Archbishop of York asking the Saxons in their own language if they consented that William, Duke of Normandy, should be crowned their King. The same question was put to the Normans in French by Geoffroi, Archbishop of Coutance.

Without hesitancy and as if miraculously of one mind and voice both sides, each in its own tongue, gave assurance of joyful agreement, and with such fervour that the Church resounded with the tumultous uproar of acclamation. The noise penetrated to the very streets outside. There the Norman soldiers on guard hearing the tumult, without understanding its cause were fearful lest the cries were those of tumult and their Seigneur's life menaced. Confusion followed uncertainty of action and in the disorder fire was set by accident or design, the accounts differ, to some houses adjacent to the Abbey. The flames spread rapidly among the timbered buildings, and ere long, as Archbishop Eldred was anointing William on head, hands and breast with the holy oil, the smoke and noise of the disorder outside

[1] The coronation service of to-day is largely adapted from one contained in an XI century manuscript, the property of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. This service was in all probability used at the coronation of the Conqueror, and of Harold before him.

penetrated within the Abbey walls. Panic ensued ; the frightened bystanders, Normans and Saxons, men as well as women, of diverse dignity and rank, fled in consternation, their progress hindered by Norman soldiery striving to enter the church. William himself, for perhaps the first time in his eventful life, felt fear. It is said he trembled visibly but sternly ordered the service should proceed. Around as well as in the church reigned inexpressible confusion ; some ran to quell the conflagration or strove to bring order out of chaos ; others, and they perhaps were in the majority, profited by the disorder to plunder and do deeds of violence. The snow outside was red with the blood of wounded and slain. Before long, save for the Archbishops and a few trembling and affrighted priests and nobles grouped about the King-elect before the altar the Abbey was empty. The Archbishop and his assistants, dismayed at the unhappy events, seeing in them, as it were, the unmistakable signs of God's wrath, hurried through the sacred office and scarce listened to the oath taken by the new King, the ancient one used by his Saxon predecessors, enjoining true peace to the church of God and all Christian people, equity and mercy in judgments and forbidding rapaciousness and iniquity in every station of life ; to these things William swore assent, adding "that he promised to treat

the Anglo-Saxon people as well as the best King that people had ever had".

And thus amid a background of flame and smoke, bloodshed and disorder, tragic in its intensity, William the bastard, Duke of Normandy, was crowned King of England.

In spite of the untoward events connected with his coronation, the first few months of William's reign in England were devoid of any serious insurrection or unrest of importance, among its people, and with his accustomed ardour the conqueror, with the policy of a constructive statesman, turned his attention to the "sages dispositions" of the affairs of his new kingdom. He made no changes in law or custom and the privileges of London were recognised by royal writ.[1] He forbade acts of sedition, concerted reunions, carnage and rapine, restraining arms by law as he had restrained the nation by arms. Robbers, brigands and malefactors found no shelter in his territory, and ports and routes of trade, which during the past year of unrest in England had virtually been closed, were reopened and made safe. Fines from the greater land-owners atoned for a resistance now counted as rebellion. Peace and order were restored.

The whole of England was not yet William's,

[1] This document is among the precious records in the Guildhall.

but to the east of a line which stretched from Norwich to Dorset his sway was unquestioned, his desire, to rule as Edward the Confessor's legitimate and peaceful successor.

For some time William continued to make his head-quarters in camp at Barking, a few miles from London, while Normans with the ready instinct of their race hastened to construct a crenellated castle with walls strong and sure for his occupancy within the city. From this fortress-castle, modelled, according to Orderic Vital, after William's château the "Haute Veille Tour" in Rouen, later grew the Tower of London.

At Barking William received the powerful chieftains of Northumberland and Mercia, Edwin and Morcar, whose voluntary submission, however, did not entail that of the Northern provinces, which for the present remained quietly aloof. Generous toward those who acknowledged his authority as he was "stark" to them who withstood it, the example of these earls from the north in rendering the conqueror homage was followed by other rich and influential Saxons. They are named in the chronicles and noted as having kept their possessions with honour.

The estates of the English who had fallen or fought at the battle of Hastings were declared forfeited and taken by William to divide among his followers, the majority of whom had crossed

the sea to serve him with the sole idea of reward in view. As previously agreed in Normandy, William gave, as far as in his power lay, to each his desire. "Barons and knights received not only domains and manoirs, but in many instances, marrying rich Saxon heiresses, became Lords of strong castles, small towns, entire villages; lowly vassals were given houses, land, or money. With the chances of fortune in Norman favour oft-times the poor foot soldier donned a coat of mail and mounted a charger, the simple cavalier unfurled a standard and led a company of men-at-arms; the cowherds of Normandy and the weavers of Flanders became men of rank and even Barons."

Those nearest William were not forgotten in the general distribution, the care and advancement of his own family being one of the Conqueror's strongest characteristics, a characteristic which at times generated into a weakness; to his half-brother Odo, the Bishop, he confided Dover and the county of Kent, to the other brother Robert, Count of Mortain, large possessions in Sussex: to his nephew Hughes Loup d'Avranches, the county of Chester. His favourite knight, Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, obtained Hereford; the earldoms of Arundel and Chichester were given Roger de Montgomery. The list of land and possessions passing from Saxon into

Norman hands at this or a later period was enormous, but in every case the transfer was done with all the regularity of the law as William saw it.

There was but one among the vast company of knights in William's train who, it is related, refused reward. His name was Guilbert, son of Richard: "he wished neither land, gold nor wife, and would accept nothing from the spoils of the conquered; he had accompanied his Seigneur to England," he said, "because it was his duty; usurped wealth not tempting him, he would return to Normandy to enjoy his heritage, modest but legitimate; content with that which was his own he desired nothing belonging to others."

The wealth of Harold's treasury William reserved to enrich his own coffers; but a portion of it, together with the standard carried by the English at the battle of Hastings, "a glorious gonfanon blazing with gems and displaying wrought in purest gold the old device of Eteoktos the armed warrior advancing to battle," he at once dispatched across the sea to Pope Alexander in recognition of his support and favour.

In March, 1067, six months from the time William landed at Pevensey to combat the English, the affairs of his newly-won kingdom were in such good order that, eager with joy and anticipation, he again embarked at the Sussex port in

the " Mora ", with its gilded sides and dazzling white sails, to visit Normandy, his wife and children. William appointed as joint-regents to govern England during his absence his brother Odo, newly created Earl of Kent, " a man equally at home in war and politics as in ecclesiastical affairs, and who could wield a lance with the skill of a practised knight," and the Seneschal, Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, alike famous for his courage and wisdom, the knight closest to William in affection.

A brilliant following of English nobles of rank and distinction, Edgar Atheling, Stigand Archbishop of Canterbury, the Earls of Northumberland and Mercia, Waltheof of famous Saxon lineage, helped to form William's train ; their presence, more constrained than voluntary, perhaps, serving not only to enhance the triumph of his return but the double purpose of providing hostages ready to hand, answerable to their new king for the fidelity of the English nation during his absence abroad.

Before setting sail, William rewarded with a generous hand those of his warriors about to recross the sea with him that none might say he had not gained by the conquest of England, while English men-of-arms who attached themselves to him were awarded generous pay.

Duchess Mathilde, for she had not yet assumed

the title of Queen, with the children, were in readiness to greet her Lord at Fécamp, and although the time of William's arrival in Normandy was during the season of Lenten penitence, the whole country gave itself up to transports of joy; from near-by cities, from distant and obscure hamlets, the Normans came to see and greet their Seigneur; and as through their midst he made his royal progress and entered the capital city of Rouen, old and young, men, women and children, citizens of every rank and position advanced before him celebrating with shouts of joy and acclamation his triumphal return to his native land.

Every Norman considered himself individually as the conqueror of England and with a vanity, subtle in its intensity as if to gain new laurels, all took pleasure in overwhelming with honours and attention, not only compatriots but those of the foreign nation attending the new king.

The days passed as one long holiday; in church and monastery the sombre chant of miserere gave way to psalms of thanksgiving; the sun above, as if to share the common joy, shone with the warmth and brilliancy of summer.

King William passed the Easter-tide at the Abbey of St. Trinité at Fécamp, and there among the nobles and prelates of rank and distinction, who came to join in the festivals and entertain-

ments, he received Raoul, Count of Mantes, who attended by a large suite of cavaliers came on behalf of his son-in-law, Philippe I of France, to offer William congratulations. The French gazed with wonder at the spoils of the conquered land, from which, it is said, William brought more gold and silver than could be collected in all Gaul, and were not less amazed than the Normans at the great beauty, " a beauty," says Guillaume de Poitiers, " which did not pall before that of young girls " of the youthful Saxons with long and flowing hair, in the King's train. They admired, too, the garments in cloth of gold or silk, embroidered with gold in relief and ornamented in a manner of oriental magnificence, worn by the King and the lords of his suite. The Saxon women of that time, especially those of Kent, were adepts in all the highest forms of needlework, theirs the art, the same art that made in finest threads of gold the " fighting-man " on Harold's banner, which wrought these garments. The men of the same nation were not less renowned as weavers, goldsmiths, and workers in all sorts of metals.

The choicest fruits of these gainful crafts, which William well knew how to encourage in his new realm, ornaments in gold and silver, jewellery, costly gems, superb stuffs, vases enchased with precious metals, gorgeous vestments, and rich

hangings for church and altar, he now displayed before the wondering eyes of the visitors from France. And at the sacred offices, which he forced the crowd of gay young knights to interrupt their amusements to attend, he himself doing so with humble devotion, their piety, as well as that of his own subjects, was often distracted by the splendour of his equipage and that of his companions.

At a feast given in honour of the French visitors, "one could relate things past belief," rarest meats were served in gold and silver vessels and wine was alone quaffed from cups of these precious metals; or if the large Saxon drinking vessels, made from the horns of the wild bull of the English woods, were used, they were tipped at each end with the same costly metals, the fineness of the workmanship alone making them objects of value and beauty. In a word, everything was done to show the value of William's new-won prize, to add lustre to his new-gained crown in the eyes of those present. Not a hint of the avarice said to have been his limited William's prodigal expenditure at this time. "The French noted all these things, and everything they had seen until now seemed of little worth; and, as if England and France had been the most distant lands one from the other, the Seigneurs of the French embassy

boasted on returning to their own court of the new sights, the strange people, and the royal magnificence they had just seen in Normandy."

William passed the summer, autumn and part of the winter in his Duchy, and these months spent in the midst of those dearest to him, surrounded by loyal subjects celebrating en fête in friendly rivalry the successful achievement of his hazardous venture across the sea, form perhaps the happiest and most tranquil period of any length of his life, a life full as it was of constant activity, peril, strife and unrest. Now once more could he accord his time and affection to the care and advancement of the Normandy he loved so well; again be present at the innumerable ceremonies connected with the outward expression of his faith, a faith the material evidences of which were so closely allied with the interests of the State as to make one and the other inseparable.

Nor had affairs, either state or ecclesiastical, suffered during William's absence in England, for Duchess Mathilde's rule, and her task was not always a light one, had been one of both prudence and ability; no civil strife divided Norman interests; its relations with foreign Princes were those of peace; Mathilde, too, once her influence dominant, had won a new place for the gentler forms of amusement and had awakened at the court a taste for music and poetry; a court whose

diversions had hitherto centred exclusively in the hazards of the chase, in the skill evinced in contest of arms. From this period dates the epic, valuable for innumerable details not found elsewhere, composed at the Duchess' command by Guy, the famous Bishop of Amiens, celebrating William's triumphs in England. This distinguished prelate was frequently summoned to assist in Mathilde's council, and the might of his eloquence oftimes won over some turbulent baron to her side. Mathilde herself, according to tradition, surrounded by her attendant maidens, had occupied her spare hours during the weary months of waiting and expectancy with the execution of the famous embroidery, "La Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde," which depicts and is a faithful record of the principal events leading up to, and culminating in, her husband's victory at Hastings. On every side with proof of affectionate loyalty and appreciation William saw much to gratify and praise, "and where his quick eye saw the lack of needful measures, new edicts of advantage to his people were proclaimed by the mouth of his herald."

On the first of May, the feast of St. Philippe and St. Jacque, William with a concourse of nobles and retainers was present at the hallowing of the Abbey Church of St. Marie (or St. Pierre) sur-Dives, the monastery being situated not far from

the river's mouth, the harbour, where but a short year since as Norman Duke he had gathered together the fleet for the invasion of the land of which he was now King.

July first found William at Jumiège and his heart rejoiced that he could again visit his beloved Benedictine Abbey; never had the meadows about it seemed to him so full of bloom, nor the sky above so blue, the air so clear and golden; never before had the forest, from above which rose like arms upraised in prayer the two towers of the new minster, marking the swift course of the Seine to meet the sea, seemed thus green and fragrant with the freshness of early summer. Twenty-seven years had elapsed since the Jumiège Abbey Church of Saint Marie had been begun; now, largely owing to William's interest and munificence and as if in fitting climax to his triumphal return to Normandy, it was ready for consecration, which with the stately ceremonials significant of the Catholic faith, took place at this time in his royal presence, his favour shown anew by additional gifts, fresh grants to the already powerful and wealthy community.

But on every side, whether assisting at the dedication of a church, the election of an Abbot, or the consecration of a Bishop, wherever he made his progress William with lavish hand brought gifts to church and convent, crucifixes set with

Picturesque ruins of the Abbey of Jumièges ; founded in the VIIth Century, destroyed by the Norsemen in the IXth Century ; restored by William the Conqueror in the XIth Century ; destroyed anew during the Revolution in the XVIIIth Century

Cl. Archives Photographiques-Paris

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precious stones, vases of gold, embroidered vestments, and palliums of worth, the richest of all reserved for his Abbey of penance, the Abbaye-aux-Hommes, at Caen. And, where he could not give in person, presents were sent, in many cases, according to Guillaume de Poitiers, treasures which the churches in England took pleasure in sending as gifts to the sister churches across the sea.

In the meantime while fêtes and rejoicings were the portion in Normandy, discontent and signs of serious unrest were evident on the other side of the channel among the Saxon people, and William was forced to turn his attention from pacific occupations to those less pleasant.

Both the powerful Odo and Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, abusing their newly-conferred power, had occupied themselves less with the care of the kingdom during its ruler's absence than with measures for their own aggrandisement, with adding to their own wealth and might. The Normans likewise under them, arrogant with unrestrained power, committed each day some fresh excess. Nor would the Regents listen to the murmurs of the oppressed people, their homes pillaged, their persons outraged, and even deemed it a crime on the part of the Saxons to meet force with force. Revolt and insurrection, the natural sequence of the harshness and injustice of their misrule, showed itself now here, now there,

until both Regents, aroused and alarmed and distrustful of their own power to maintain for William the possessions already won, sent an urgent message to him to return in haste. "The situation is grave," they apprized him, "fortresses are being built near the châteaux, and the cities, liberally supplied with men, arms and provisions, refuse to open their gates to the Norman cavaliers entrusted to govern them." William at once took leave of Mathilde, the reins of government again committed to her care, his "beau pays de Normandie", and December 6th "on a cold and stormy winter's night", set sail from Dieppe for England, arriving in London to celebrate for the second time in his new kingdom, the Christmas festival.

CHAPTER X

Insurrection in Kent put down—William spends Christmas in London—Effects of the Regent's misrule on William's policy—Decides to subjugate that part of England not yet his—Siege and submission of Exeter—Mathilde accompanied by her children arrives in Winchester—Dual coronation in the West Minster, May 11th, 1069—Brilliant fêtes in connection therewith—Birth of Henri—Concerted movement in the north against William—Mathilde returns to Normandy—William's march of devastation through Northumbria—William spends Christmas in York—Occupation of Chester 1070 and Ely 1071 ends concerted rebellion against Norman rule in England—Fate of the different leading conspirators.

CHAPTER X

"The essence of war is violence, and moderation in war is imbecility."

The most serious of the revolts, that of Kent, whose people ironically enough invited a Norman knight of valour, Eustache Count of Boulogne, who cherished at the time some grievance against his Seigneur, to help overthrow his countrymen's rule, was successfully put down before William's return to England. Once there, his presence re-established at least an outward appearance of tranquillity in and about his capital, and the season's fêtes, celebrated with due splendour, made the Christmas Court in London a brilliant one. Summoned to it by William's express command were many Saxon lords and clergy of distinction, to all of whom he showed marked favour, his "baiser de bienvenue" followed by heed to their complaints, by compliance to their demands, with promises for the future.

But the worst and most lasting result of the disorders brought about by the Regent's misrule was to fill William's mind with suspicion toward the Saxons as subjects ever ready for revolt,

nor did his subordinates fail to aggravate this distrust by tales of Saxon treachery; of dangers brought to nought by drastic measures, to which the Normans had been exposed during his absence abroad. Mistaking the effect for the cause William weighed in his mind what the results would have been under a less rigorous government, straightforth increased the severity of his own rule and determined to push forward without delay the pacifications of the provinces not yet under his control, to crush, if need be by force, a people he could not otherwise win.

Early in the year 1068 William commenced with his usual energy the campaign of subjugation, marching on the city of Exeter as the centre of the disaffection in the West. "We willingly consent", replied the citizens within the city's walls to William's demands, "to pay as tribute the tax we gave to our Kings of old but we will not swear allegiance and are sufficiently strong to defend our ramparts". "I desire subjects and I myself dictate the conditions", William made answer and forthwith lay siege to the city, which after eighteen days' stubborn resistance, surrendered. A castle known to this day as "Rougemont", from the red colour of the ground on which it stands, was then built in its midst and strongly garrisoned with Norman soldiers, a safeguard against further insurrections from

a people "whose good faith might be strongly suspected". Cornwall, where the Britons had formed a defensive alliance with the Anglo-Saxons against William, was then subdued; Bristol fell into his hands and by the autumn of 1068 the South-West, in fact all of England except the North, was his.

William made his headquarters that winter in Winchester and sent from there to Normandy for his beloved Duchess, whom for measures of prudence he had delayed having in England before, but whose presence now that his own position was seemingly secure in his new Kingdom was necessary to add brilliancy to the Court and dignity to the throne whose honours she shared with him. A company of nobles was despatched to escort the Duchess and her children across the sea," and great was Mathilde's joy when her noble husband sent for her, and eagerly did she hasten to obey his summons." Her costumes and most splendid parure were quickly gathered together; linen of the finest, "cyclades" or tunics of silk of oriental tissue richly embroidered at wristband and hem, mantles furlined and likewise embroidered, and veils for head-dress, long, ample and of cobwebby fineness. The most precious jewels in Mathilde's coffers had been sent, it is said, by Duke Robert from the Orient and presented by William to his bride on their

marriage ; they included clasps of silver and gold encrusted with gems, necklaces, girdles, and rings; these with her finest " necessaire de toilette ", including a large ivory comb and " gravonère " [1] for the hair parting, were carefully disposed by her maidens for the long journey that Mathilde might with pride appear before the English in all the splendour and magnificence due to her royal husband's name and position.[2]

Normans of distinction anxious to take part in the triumph and largesse of their sovereign formed Mathilde's train ; the ladies of honour attending her person were of birth and dower and all alike eager to set forth, anticipating with delight alliances of mark for themselves, in that strange country whose riches were likened to the treasury of Arabia, whose rapid conquest seemed more a fairy tale than a reality.

Great preparations were made in Winchester for Duchess Mathilde's reception, and greater still for her coronation, which took place with appropriate solemnity in London in the West Minster, by the hands of Eldred Archbishop of York, on Whitsunday, May 11th, 1069. That the ceremony might be the more impressive

[1] A small stick of wood or ivory with ornamental handle used in the Middle Ages for parting the hair.

[2] Suzanne Turgis in *La Reine Mathilde*.

William chose to be recrowned with his Duchess.[1] The scene must have been a brilliant one and should the " Tapisserie de la Reine Mathilde ", the epic in embroidery of her husband's triumphs, have adorned the church's nave, it must have made a softer background than stone for the court ladies' rich attire, the resplendent dress of state of knights and entourage, the glint of mediaeval arms. No accident marred this dual coronation, a joyous as well as brilliant one, a contrast to William's first crowning on that memorable Christmas Day in 1066.

It is said the grace and majesty of the new Queen,[2] and the beauty of her children, together with the pomp and glitter of the great pageant, impressed and delighted Mathilde's new subjects who, as arranged, served her as soon as Archbishop Eldred had placed the crown " of gold resplendent with precious stones " upon her head, replacing the Norman courtiers who had attended their Duchess to the Church.[3] Nor did the festival end with the great one in the Abbey: splendid

[1] William in being crowned more than once set an example which was followed by his immediate successors.

[2] From " cween ", signifying in a strict sense woman. Mathilde was the first consort of a King of England who was called Regina, and she is so named in the Doomsday Book. *Queens of England*, Strickland.

[3] Many feudal offices of subsequent coronations are said to date from this time.

ceremonials marked the banquet[1]; and jousts, races, pageants and exhibitions of prowess and skill in archery formed not less one of the most attractive parts of the fêtes connected with the coronation. William, who for the time overcame his natural inclination to avarice, spared no expense to make the entertainments the most brilliant until now seen at the court, and the many strangers who had come to the Queen's crowning, curious no doubt, not less to see it than the attitude of the English under their new master, were alike amazed and delighted at the lavish, but withal, artistic display. All the Norman courtiers who composed William's train were keen to prove their mettle in prowess and courtesy, and Henri de Beaumont, whom William had created Earl of Warwick, the son of the famous Beaumont, who had done so much for William in the past, is especially mentioned

[1] Mathilde, though residing chiefly in Normandy, had her distinct revenues, perquisites, and privileges as Queen of England. She was allowed to claim her aurum reginae, or queen gold; that is, the tenth part of every fine voluntary that was paid to the crown. She received from the city of London sums to furnish oil for her lamp, wood for her hearth, and tolls or imports on goods landed at Queenhithe; with many other immunities, which the queen-consorts in latter days have not ventured to claim.

"The table at which the queen herself sat was furnished with viands at the daily expenditure of forty shillings. Twelve pence each was allowed for the sustenance of her hundred attendants." Strickland's *Queens of England*.

by name as having won all hearts by his charm of mind and person, and of having greatly distinguished himself in the tournaments given at this time.

In the early part of the succeeding winter, Queen Mathilde gave birth to a son, who was named Henri, later Henry I of England, the only one of the Conqueror's children born in his new kingdom.

During the summer following Mathilde's coronation there were evident signs that the tranquility seemingly established in England was not in reality a fact. The attitude of the Northern provinces, hitherto defiant, was now openly aggressive, Northumbria and Mercia the rallying-ground of malcontents anxious to cast off the Norman yoke.

Two measures most unpopular with the Saxons were the levying anew by William of the Danegeld, abolished in the reign of Edward the Confessor, and the " couvre feu " or curfew bell, the latter an especially aggravating source of trouble with the intractable Northumbrians, who found in it a daily reminder of their loss of liberty.

Edwin, Earl of Northumbria, together with his brother Morcar, Earl of Mercia, withdrew from William's court (the former, according to Orderic Vital, more from pique at William's refusal to give him his daughter Constance in marriage

than anything else) and were the leading spirits in the general uprising of which Edgar Atheling, proclaimed king anew at York and recognised as such by the countries between the Tees and Humber, was the nominal head.

Sueon II of Denmark, Malcom King of Scotland, and the King of Wales all joined, each from a different motive, the concerted movement which soon spread downward from the North to the very borders of the Metropolis, the object of which was to withstand and if possible overthrow William's authority.

At the first signs of the grave and immediate dangers menacing his throne William sent Mathilde, "whom he loved tenderly," back to Normandy, not only that she might be secure from the unrest which agitated England but that she could the better watch over and preserve intact for their son Robert the duchy which was to be his one day. Much to William's chagrin several of his most prominent cavaliers returned to Normandy at the same time with Mathilde, urged thereto by the frequent solicitations of their wives, who, according to Orderic Vital, refusing to undertake the perilous journey to England where the "furieux Anglois" assassinated Normans in the woods and on the highways, threatened their respective lords with "affaires de coeur", not consistent with conjugal fidelity,

should they be left longer in Normandy to languish alone. Hughes de Grantmenil, whose wife was commonly reputed one of the most beautiful women in Europe, and Onfroi du Tilleul are two of the cavaliers mentioned in the chronicles by name among those who, deserting their over-lord at this critical juncture, foreswore their loyalty as vassals and forfeited estates and position in England, never again conferred upon them nor their descendants, to defend and guard their honour as husbands.[1]

The vast majority of William's countrymen, however, Seigneurs and soldiery alike, remained faithful and were soon marching with him towards York to avenge the terrible massacre of the entire Norman garrison; a culminating act of defiance on the part of the Saxons who, after desperate fighting with alternate reverse and success to their arms, had gained possession of the city.

News of its loss and the attendant conflagration which destroyed wholly, or in part, the Cathedral, the Monastery of St. Peter, and the famous Library,[2] was brought to William as he followed

[1] Some historians not crediting the version given in the Chronicles cite this desertion as redounding to William's discredit, as offering proof that he was unable to hold the loyalty of his own countrymen.

[2] Founded, it is said, by Archbishop Robert about the year 800.

the chase in the forest of Dene, and he swore in dreadful wrath "by the splendour of God" that not a single Northumbrian should escape his vengeance.

Oxford, Warwick, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Lincoln fell successively into William's hands as he made his progress Northward, and in the army's wake arose on each vantage point those citadels of mediaeval strength—the fortified châteaux—the Norman garrison within, a gage of submissive adherence for the future. At one time the swollen waters of the Aire barred the army's passage, but neither the forces of nature nor the frequent instances of his officers caused William to turn back, and for three long weary weeks with dogged determination he encamped upon the river's bank until the waters subsiding and a ford practicable, the difficulties were overcome. But with the further advance into Northumbria other obstacles and other difficulties arose: the ways became more hazardous; the forests wellnigh impenetrable; the paths o'er vale and swamp and mountain side devious and oft-times so narrow two men could not walk abreast nor continue mounted.

Calm and unshaken in purpose, William's intrepid courage was a constant example to his men, and always himself the first to lead in danger, he suffered neither complaints nor

weariness to interfere with the campaign he had marked out of fire and sword.

It were well could we but draw a veil on all that followed, for never had William shown such cruelty, a cruelty he himself bitterly bewailed later on his deathbed.

While part of his army invested York and drove the Danes back to their ships, and the Scots over the border, he gave full rein to his passion: he reduced towns and villages to ashes; cattle and all manner of provisions, together with the crops in the fields and the implements for their care, he utterly destroyed; those who, hidden in inaccessible places, sought to escape his wrath he pursued; innocent and guilty alike felt the fury of his resentment. The country beyond the Humber he laid waste as a desert, and, famine following close upon destruction, hundreds perished from starvation and want alone.

"I have not hesitated," says Orderic Vital, "to laud William on many occasions but now, touched with profound pity, I prefer rather to associate myself with the misery and unhappiness of an unfortunate people, than applaud the author of so much needless destruction of life." Strategy, however, which William as a military genius had ever in view, went hand in hand with this terrible revenge—a barren country affording

neither foothold nor resources for incursive bands of Danes or borderers.

The Saxon army disbanded, Edgar Atheling sought anew asylum in Scotland, and the chief leaders in the revolt, acknowledging defeat, swore for themselves and their vassals fidelity to William.

William spent Christmas in York, the crown and other royal ornaments and accessories brought thither from Winchester that the feast of the Nativity might be celebrated with due and solemn grandeur.

There now remained but the subjugation of the North-West of England to be accomplished, and neither the rigours of a severe winter nor the hundred odd miles of intervening snow-bound country, with its stretches of wide wind-swept moorlands, were obstacles strong enough to prevent William leaving York early in January for Chester, the chief rallying point of those who still withstood his authority. But the way was not long before murmurs of discontent arose in William's army, whose men exhausted from the rigorous exertions of the past months were tired of the privations the campaign entailed; and when at length, provisions failing, they were forced to consume the flesh of horses which had perished by the way the mercenaries of Anjou, Maine and Brittany openly mutinied

and demanded release from the King's service. " Let them go if it pleases them ", said William with apparent indifference, " I do not need their help ; as cowards without strength or courage I despise those who abandon me ; it is by labour alone honours are achieved ".

Dauntlessly, and ever with unfailing courage and cheerfulness at the head of those who remained loyal, William pushed forward to his goal, and " never ", says Green, " had he shown the grandeur of his character so memorably as on that terrible march, a march mid tempests of snow, of rain, of hail, he oft-times himself on foot, not only leading the way, but aiding with his own hands to clear a passage through the drifting snow that man and beast might pass ".

With the occupation of Chester that spring of 1070 and the taking early in the next year of Ely, where, amidst the marshy fens of Cambridgeshire, Saxon refugees under the leadership of the famous Hereward-the-Wake had long resisted William's authority, all concerted rebellion against Norman rule ended in England.

Malcolm of Scotland swore fealty to the Conqueror and Edgar Atheling, who lived at his court, renounced his claim to the English throne for thirteen shillings and fourpence, some

say, a silver pound, a day.[1] Of the others who had played a prominent part in these stormy times Edwin of Northumbria was killed in ambush, a dastardly deed deplored by William, who forthwith banished the perpetrators of the crime from the kingdom : Morcar of Mercia was imprisoned ; Hereward-the-Wake made good his escape by sea but, in after years, being reconciled to William, served him faithfully in "foreign wars". Earl Waltehof, a Saxon, noble in rank, disposition and attainments, high in William's esteem, had received pardon for his disloyalty as one of the leaders of his countrymen at York, but his share in subsequent conspiracies against the crown, treacherously betrayed by his wife Judith, a niece of William's on his mother's side, later brought about a sentence of death and Waltehof's public execution at Winchester —his being the one and only execution recorded against William during his reign in England.

Normans and Saxons alike held Judith in

[1] From this time Edgar Atheling passed much of his time in Normandy, where his attention was more taken up with horses and dogs and the pleasures of the chase than politics. Apartments were set apart for him in the ducal Château at Rouen, and he was ever treated by William with attention and generosity. On making a pilgrimage in later years to the Holy Land, Prince Edgar was escorted by a company of two hundred knights which William, at his own expense, "took pleasure in furnishing him."

contempt for her ignominious share in the affair, and she returned to Normandy, where, forbidden for all time the court by Mathilde's orders, she lived in indigence and ignominy to the end of her life.

CHAPTER XI

Dissension between William and his eldest son—Robert demands Normandy—Conversations between William and Robert—Climax of dissension at L'aigle—Robert leaves Normandy—Wanders for five years in other lands—Mathilde secretly sends her son money—Surprised by William in the act—William's anger—Philippe I of France supports Robert against his father—Siege of Château Gerberoi—William unhorsed by Robert—Subsequent reconciliation between father and son—Short-lived—Robert goes to the Holy Land—Mathilde's death 1081—Testament.

CHAPTER XI

"Mathilde, l'auguste reine,
D'une vertu haute et séreine
A laissé parmi nous l'immortal souvenir."

Alph Le Flaguais.

From now on until the end of his life, William's reign was a troubled one. Not from causes, however, arising in his new kingdom, whose subjects since the last tentative at Ely were in the main loyal and submissive, but engendered for the most part by his eldest son Robert, whose rebellious spirit produced dissension and unrest in Normandy, unhappiness and discord between William and Mathilde.

Robert, it will be recalled, when still a youth in his teens, had been associated with Mathilde and the Duke de Beaumont in the government of Normandy, and had himself been nominal head of the military forces there. But with each succeeding year away from his father's control, Robert demanded more independence of action and interpreting the promise made by William at the Council of Lillebonne that Normandy should be his, as meaning when the subjugation of England should be complete

and not as a legacy at the Conqueror's death, Robert claimed the Duchy as his own and considered it a personal affront that his royal father exacted of him the obedience of a subject, the duty of a son.

Robert's oft repeated claim regarding Normandy coming to William's ear, drew forth on one occasion the sententious remark that it was not his custom to undress before he was ready for bed; and anew William exacted of his son submission and loyalty.

Ambitious, proud, quick to take offence, a great talker and an even greater spendthrift, Robert was nevertheless generous of impulse, brave and skilful in arms. No archer was more adroit, nor sure of his aim, no Prince of his time more renowned in feats of military skill. His good qualities were for the most part showy ones, but they attracted to him, if not friends, at least partisans by whom he was easily influenced and familiarly known as "Gamberon" or "Courte-Heuse", from his thick-set body and short legs.

These young knights forming Robert's entourage were for the most part scions of nobility without wealth, their only recommendation hardiness in adventure and recklessness in pursuit of the fortune they hoped to gain without undue effort on their own part, by attaching themselves to

his cause. And their interests lay undoubtedly in the success of Robert's demands; as ruler of Normandy the young pleasure-loving Prince, who in anticipation already bestowed with prodigality possessions not yet his, would be a more indulgent chief to serve than the redoubtable William. By seditious flattery they encouraged Robert to acts of insubordination, and at length breaking all bounds of decency and to provoke him to more active measures against his father, one of them said to him, "Very noble son of the King, why do you continue in such great poverty? Those who surround your father guard the royal treasure so jealously that it is with difficulty you can bestow even a dernier upon your most faithful followers. For you it is a great dishonour, for us and many others, a great injury, that you remain thus estranged from the King's wealth. Why do you endure the affront? . . . How long, courageous Prince, will you suffer this injustice? Arise! Act like a man, exact of your father a part of the kingdom of Albion, or at least demand of him the Duchy of Normandy, long since accorded you in the presence of a large assembly of nobles of the realm, who are anxious and ready to serve you. It is not fitting that you any longer permit others to govern your natural subjects, nor that your demands for your

hereditary rights should be refused as those of a begging foreigner."

Stimulated to action by these words, inflamed with anger and desire, Robert sought out his father. "My lord and King" he said, "give me Normandy which long since before you went to England to combat Harold you accorded me." William replied: "That which you ask, my son, is unseemly. With Norman valour I conquered England. Normandy I possess by right of inheritance, and as long as I live it shall not leave my hands." "What shall I do with my followers, and how reward them?" "Obey me in all things, as is proper," replied William, "and everywhere, as a son associated with his father, you shall govern wisely with me." At these words Robert broke in: "I do not want everlastingly to be your hireling. I want my own estates that I may properly reward my adherents. Cede me I pray you the duchy which belongs to me, so that while you govern the kingdon of England, I for my part, while always remaining your subject, rule Normandy." William answered: "Are you not ashamed to wish to wrest from your father the estates which in due time, if you are worthy, you should with God's blessing receive by the suffrage of the people? Chose your advisers more wisely, and with prudence mistrust the irresponsible persons who foolishly

urge and excite you to seditious undertakings. Remember what befell Absalom, when he revolted against his father David, and what misfortunes came not only to him but to his counsellors and accomplices. The Normans chafe impatiently under inaction; they are ever thirsting for trouble. It is they who incite you to senseless enterprises, that in the confusion they may throw off all restraint of discipline and commit evil deeds with impunity. Do not listen to the advice of petulant youth, but heed that of Lanfranc, and other wise men of ripe age. If you follow carefully what I advise you will in the end congratulate yourself on your wise conduct. If on the contrary you yield to the proposals of hotheads, you will for a long time have subject for complaint in contumacious refusal." "My lord and King," said Robert, "I did not come here to listen to sermons, with which in my youth I was surfeited ad nauseam by my tutors. Answer me positively about the possessions due me; I must know what I am to do. I am irrevocably resolved, and I want the whole world to know it, that from this day forth that I may not have to put up with the unprofitable rank of a dependant, I will fight for no one, no matter whom, in Normandy." More accustomed to command than to have his orders discussed, and surprised at his son's insolence, William replied with

heat, "I have explained to you clearly enough my intentions, and it is not necessary for me to go into further detail. As long as I live, Normandy, my native country, shall not leave my hands. As to England, which I conquered with much toil and labour, I do not wish and am not going to divide it during my lifetime . . . He who put me on the throne will dispose of my kingdom according to His Divine Will . ."

In a fury of discontent and resentment Robert left his father's presence and from now on the relations between them were strained to breaking point, the division of interest in the family circle more marked. The Conqueror's two younger sons, jealous perhaps of their mother's openly evinced sympathy and preference for her first born and favourite child, took sides with their father, and made Robert's dominating and pretentious aspirations a constant source of jest and raillery. According to Orderic Vital, a trivial act of buffoonery on their part brought things to a head.

The royal family were at the Château of L'aigle, a favourite abode of William's when following the chase in the surrounding forests. One day Guillaume and Henri, amusing themselves in an upper room of the Château throwing dice, in a boyish exuberance of spirit and wanton play threw water, not over clean, from a window on

their brother whom they saw walking with some of his friends in the courtyard below. For the moment Robert was inclined to take the silly horse-play in good part and his anger and resentment were not directed against his young brothers, until aroused by Alberic de Grantmenil, one of his closest friends, who said: "Why doest thou suffer this affront? Doest thou not see that thy brothers, thinking themselves better than thou, thus evince their contempt by covering us with filth? Doest thou not see what it means? Those with the least discernment can! If thou doest not quickly avenge this public insult, thou art irrevocably lost."

Sword in hand, Robert mounted the stairs precipitately and but for the timely arrival of William, attracted by the uproar, upon the scene, who interposed his authority to settle the affray, a tragedy had surely been enacted in that upper room.

Robert left L'aigle that night and a few days later, with a chosen band of friends, Normandy, to seek his fortune elsewhere. For several years Robert wandered in foreign lands, going first to his mother's people, to his uncle Robert-le-Frison, in Flanders, then to the latter's brother, Odon, Archbishop of Trèves, on the banks of the Rhine. He visited the courts and the principal seigneurs in Lorraine, in Aquitania, in Gascony,

and everywhere he told a tale embellished in successive tellings, no doubt, of his father's injustice toward him. He was the recipient of lordly gifts on the part of some sympathisers; at other times he was reduced by pressing want to have recourse to the money-lenders of the land. But a fitful intercourse, which time and distance in those days imposed, was kept up between Robert and Mathilde, the latter knowing her son's destitution, sending him when possible gifts unknown to her husband of money, or jewels from her casket to be converted into it, for his sustenance. But with Robert to have was to spend, and money in hand with reckless prodigality was bestowed on his followers who were not less slow than eager to waste his uncertain resources in riotous living. Mathilde's share in thus actively sustaining her rebellious son against his father, coming to William's knowledge, was subject of both chagrin and denunciation on his part, and surprising Mathilde one day in the very act of taking money from the royal coffers to send Robert, he turned upon his wife and in bitterness of reproach rather than anger said "The observation of a certain sage is true, and I have only too much cause to admit the strength of his words, 'the woman who deceives her husband is the cause of his downfall.' From henceforth where in all the world can one find

a faithful and devoted helpmeet? Behold my wife, whom I love as my very soul, and to whom from among all in my kingdom I entrust my power and wealth, supporting my adversaries against me; enriching them from the wealth confided to her keeping; employing her zeal in fortifying and sustaining them against me".

Mathilde replied: "My lord, I entreat you be not surprised that I feel a mother's tenderness for my first born child. By the virtue of the Most High, if my son Robert were dead and hid from the sight of the living seven feet deep in the earth and the price of my blood could restore him to life, I should cheerfully bid it flow for him. For his sake I could endure any suffering, even that from which otherwise the frailty of my sex would make me shrink. How can you suppose that I could enjoy wealth and plenty and allow my son to pine in want and misery? Far from my heart be such hardness which even your authority should not impose upon me." Turning from his wife, his face blanched, William, seeking more active vengenace, would have seized Mathilde's messenger, Samson, a Breton, the go-between in the transactions between mother and son, and put out his eyes, had not Samson, warned in time by Mathilde, sought refuge at Saint Evroult, where in haste embracing a religious life, cowled and tonsured, he saved at one

and the same time perhaps, both soul and body.

It is not recorded, however, that Mathilde ever again sent pecuniary assistance to her son.

Now there lived at this time in Trevès a holy man named Simeon the Stylite, famed alike for the austerity of his life and his good works as for his powers of prophecy. Mathilde, in her anguish of mind, turned to him imploring not only his prayers for the reconciliation of father and son, but asking at the same time for light as to the future. "Return to your illustrious mistress" said the anchorite to Mathilde's expectant messengers, "and relate to her on my behalf a dream I have had after three days fast and prayer concerning the things she fain would know. I saw in the vision a certain beautiful meadow covered with grass and flowers and a noble charger grazing therein. A numerous herd gathered about eager to enter and share the pasturage, but the fiery charger permitted none to approach near enough to crop the flowers and herbage. But alas! the majestic steed in the midst of his pride and glory died, and a wanton foolish steer appeared in his place as guardian of the flowery meadow. Forthwith the throng of meaner animals who had hitherto feared to approach rushed in trampling grass and flowers

beneath their feet, and what they did not devour they defiled and destroyed.

"Now the meaning of this is clear. The meadow signifies Normandy; the grass the multitude of people who enjoy there the blessings of peace and the productive fruits of abundance; the flowers are the churches where the faithful apply themselves continually to celestial meditation. The charger is none other than William of Normandy, King of England, who by his wisdom, courage and power keeps the foes of Normandy in awe . . . Robert is the indolent steer who in due course will succeed his father, and then the baser sort of animals, the envious Princes who have long watched for the opportunity of attacking the fair pasture Normandy, will overrun the land, and destroy all the prosperity which its present sovereign has established. You yourself, illustrious Princess, will not see the calamities which threaten the Normans, for after a good confession you will rest in peace and will live to see neither the death of your husband, the unhappiness of your people, nor the desolation of your beloved country."

In the meantime, tired of futile wanderings and perhaps also having worn out his welcome elsewhere, Robert directed his steps to the court of France, where he was cordially received by Philippe I, who while not openly at enmity

with William, was sufficiently jealous of his great strength and increasing power to be delighted at the occasion offered to further dissension in the duchy, on which he cast an envious eye.

To Robert, the King assigned the Château of Gerberoi in the Beauvoisis, a fortress of natural strength made still stronger by the fortifications of the time, near the Norman frontier, and thither flocked malcontents and adventurers, both Norman and French, to serve under his banner.

William on his part strengthened his border châteaux, drove back the ever-recurring bands of ravagers from his territory, and laid seige in person to Gerberoi, in his army at the time being a strong contingent of Saxon warriors, William having learned to value well both Saxon courage and fidelity. The siege was vigorous, the defence brave, and no signal advantage accrued to either side.

During one of the sorties, William and his son met and Robert unhorsed his father, not recognizing, until the visor fell at the point of his lance, the identity of his opponent. To Robert therefore belongs the honour of being the first and only one on record to have worsted William in battle, and it is doubtful, although Robert overcome with remorse begged for forgiveness then and there at his father's feet, if William

ever forgot or in his heart forgave the affront. William raised the seige, however, and forthwith returned to Normandy.

There the principal nobles of the duchy, now thoroughly alarmed at the proportions assumed in this internecine warfare, joined Mathilde and emissaries sent by Philippe I in entreating William to reconcile himself with his son. Nor did the nobles speak alone for Robert, but also for those among their own kinsmen who were joined with him in insurrection, when they said . . . . " He is guilty and has sinned in many ways, but he is full of repentance and promises for the future. We all implore your clemency . . . Punish your children when guilty ; open your arms to them when they turn to you ; with bounty forgive them as soon as they are repentant." " I am greatly astonished," replied William, " that you expend so much zeal in supplicating for one so perfidious ; for one who dares commit in my possessions an unheard of crime. Against me Robert has provoked civil war ; he has seduced my young men whom from infancy I have protected and on whom I have bestowed the arms of knighthood. He has armed against me Hugues de Château-Neuf and other foreigners. Is there one among my predecessors since Rollo who has had to suffer like insult on the part of his children ? Look at Guillaume,

son of the great Rollo, the three Richards and Robert, my Seigneur, and further consider how they as sons each faithfully served his father until death. To-day my son makes every effort to wrest from me the Duchy of Normandy and the Earldom of Maine. He has aroused the French, the Angevins, the Acquitanians and others against me as mighty enemies. He would arm against me, if he could, the whole human race, that I, together with you, might perish. According to Divine Law as given by Moses, he merits death ; and guilty of the same crime as Absolom he deserves the same death."

For a long time William remained obdurate and refused to forgive Robert, but at length the entreaties of Mathilde, the nobles and the Princes of the Church brought about the reconciliation of father and son. Soon after this event, thinking no doubt Robert for the moment better out of Normandy than in it, William assigned him an important command in the army in England and in a subsequent campaign in Wales Robert covered himself with glory. But little used to discipline, brooking neither authority nor control, it was not long before there was anew friction between father and son, and not many months passed before Robert, in displeasure, threw up his command and once more left his father's dominions. This time William called down

maledictions upon his son's head. Whether efficacious or not, Robert's career was certainly a series of unsuccessful achievements. He covered himself with glory as a crusader at the taking of Antioch and Nicæa and the siege of Jerusalem, but failed on his father's death to make Normandy for long his own and lost it irrevocably at the battle of Tinchebray, 1106. Nor did he ever rule in England, where the last twenty years of his life were spent at Cardiff Castle, a prisoner of his brother Henri I.[1] Henri was accused of having his brother's eyes put out, but when questioned on the subject by the Pope, energetically denied having caused his brother bodily harm. "I have lodged him in one of my Castles," Henri replied, "I have furnished him food in abundance . . . . together with other luxuries." Robert, it is said, learned the Welsh language during his years of captivity and an elegy in Welsh to an oak tree within view of the Castle, is attributed to him.

Mathilde's joy at the reconciliation of William and his son was indeed short-lived; the rupture anew between them a cruel blow. Suffering silently, but none the less deeply, her health

[1] Robert's tomb, with his recumbent effigy, lies before the Altar of Gloucester Cathedral. It is of Irish bog-oak, his tunic and various ornamentations painted red. His right hand is about to draw his sword; the crossed feet denote the Crusader.

gave way under the strain and at the age of forty-six, after but two days' illness, the nature of which is not stated, she died at Caen, the second of November, 1081.

The cloud which for a brief space had shadowed William and Mathilde's perfect confidence and deep affection had long since disappeared, and apprised in England of Mathilde's frail condition, William hurriedly set sail for Normandy, but arrived too late to see again in life his dearly loved wife. It is said he mourned her loss for days with bitter tears and refused to be comforted.

Mathilde was buried as was her wish in the choir of La Trinité, the abbey church of her building at Caen and where at the time her daughter Cécile was Abbess. Her funeral was one of great ceremony and pomp; and side by side with the nobles of the realm was an innumerable concourse of the lowly, "whose sobs could be heard above the chanting of the priests." On the black marble tombal stone her epitaph was later traced in Latin in letters of gold: it contained, together with a well-merited eulogy, the following touching tribute to the beloved duchess. "She loved piety, she consoled the poor, reducing herself to poverty in bestowing the riches of her treasury upon the needy," and there in La Trinité Mathilde rests in peace to-day,

for in the XVI century, when a party of Calvinists mutilated and despoiled her tomb, the tears and entreaties of the Abbess, Madame Anne de Montmorenci, caused the vandals to desist, and not desecrate and scatter her bones, as they had already done those of her Royal husband.[1]

Mathilde's testament, which is preserved in the registry of La Trinité, is short and less strict in legal terms than quaint in expression.

"I bequeath to the Abbey of Sainte Trinité at Caen my tunic worked at Winchester by the wife of Adelret; and the mantle embroidered in gold which is in my apartment to make a cope; of my two golden girdles I give the one ornamented with various emblems for the purpose of suspending the lamp before the High Altar. I give my two candelabra made at Saint Lô, my crown, my sceptre, my cups in their cases, another case worked in England, together with all the trappings of my horses and all my vessels, excepting those which I may have already disposed of during my life-time; lastly I give the estate of Quettlebon in the Cotentin,

[1] Miss Strickland relates in her *Queens of England* that Mathilde's grave was opened by the rapacious bigots and that one of them observing a gold ring set with a fine sapphire on one of the queen's fingers took it off, and with more gallantry than might have been expected from such a person, presented it to the Abbess. She afterwards gave it to her father, Baron de Conti, Connétable of France, when he came to Caen in 1563 in attendance on Charles IX.

together with two dwellings in England, and I make all these bequests with the consent of my husband."

All of Mathilde's requests were faithfully carried out by William, who ever grieved the loss of his beloved wife and it is recorded he never smiled again.

CHAPTER XII

Changes in England following the conquest—Origin of the English language—Norman customs copied by the Saxons—Commerce revives—State of the Church and Laity—Described by William of Malmesbury—The Doomsday Book—The great review of Salisbury Plain—William absolute monarch over a united England.

CHAPTER XII

"Nay, I can tell you more," said Wamba, "there is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet, while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou, but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf, too, becomes Monsieur de Veau in the like manner; he is Saxon when he requires tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment."

Ivanhoe.

It were well to consider some of the changes brought about in England during William's rule, once the military subjugation was complete: changes which for the most part were for betterment and progress, for advancement in civilization. For with the settling of the Normans in England barriers were removed which had hitherto separated to a degree the island kingdom from the more advanced civilisation of the continent. The power of assimilation of the Normans is a wonderful historical fact; Normandy one of the countries where the civilisation of the Middle Ages was best exemplified. Nor were the Normans less adept in spreading abroad Latin civilisation, a civilisation that they themselves, scarce two centuries since rude barbarian

adventurers capable of tossing captive children in the air to be caught in falling on spear-point, and of drinking from cups made from the skulls of their enemies, had learned with such alacrity.

French, as spoken by the Normans, became the language of the English court, although this was not the innovation that it might appear, as it had been largely spoken during the reign of Edward the Confessor, by the people of fashion, of refinement, and in the courts of justice as well, the sturdy Saxon people meanwhile clinging tenaciously to their mother tongue both written and spoken, which, it is said, William himself, although over forty, "that he might better administer justice to his new subjects", tried, but with indifferent success, to learn. From this gradual welding of the speech of conqueror and conquered sprang the English language with its rich and varied vocabulary, the words of everyday homely import traceable for the most part to Saxon origin, those of refinement and pleasure to French. And this Norman-French is still used in many crown formalities in England, echoes of the past, reminders of nearly a thousand years of time, of the Norman domination. The Royal assent for example to a supply bill is, "Le roy remercie ses bons subjets, accepte leur benevolence et aussi le veult"; "Le roy le veult" and "Soit fait comme il est desiré" are Royal

assents in common use,[1] while "Oyez! Oyez!"—Hear Ye! Hear Ye!— is used not only by court and crown, but by the town criers throughout rural England to arouse the attention of the public before proclaiming their news. The amusements of the conquerors soon found high favour among the Saxons, jousts, tournaments, and exhibitions of knightly skill and prowess, while the intricacies of the chase as developed by the Normans, hitherto in a more simplified form the delight of rich and poor alike in England, where game was plentiful, became the fashionable pastime alone, of the noble and rich. From William's time dates the New Forest, laid out by him, the erstwhile inhabitants dispersed elsewhere, that a royal game preserve "a mickle deer-frith", ample in extent, might be created for his pleasure. It is noted that English huntsmen for the royal preserves were retained, but that the cooks in the new king's kitchen were Norman.

Scriptural and saintly names, so lately adopted by the Normans themselves, became the fashion in England, while surnames to be handed down in an hereditary way were now used for the first time by the English. And so strong was the prejudice of the Normans in the latter regard that a Norman maiden is recorded as having refused with disdain the hand of a Saxon noble

[1] May: "Treatise on Law and Parliament."

until he should have added to his first a second name. The titles of Thane and Earl gave place to Count, Viscount and Baron. Heraldry in England likewise dates from this period, the example being set by the knights in William's train, there being few among them, as shown in the "Tapisserie de la reine Mathilde", who failed to show on shield-face some distinctive emblem—a bird, a dragon or geometrical design of some sort, crude but unmistakable signs of the beginnings of heraldry, the heraldic terms in use in England to this day—lions passant-gardent, per pale Or, evincing their Norman-French origin. It became the fashion to emulate Norman customs, and Saxons of birth and position seemed to vie with each other in the quickness and ardour with which they adopted them; "many from among them who had but lately worn the costumes of their own country and ridiculed that of the Normans now laying aside their native dress for that of the stranger."

Architecture, too, was encouraged and beside the fortified castle born of military necessity, churches and convents arose on all sides; those already existing in many cases being pulled down and replaced by others built on a grander and more magnificent scale. Scattered over England to-day they are monuments alike to the Norman's characteristic love of fine buildings, and of their

skill in creating them. Stately manors, too, were built by the very rich and influential, the chief features in each being a great hall with rows of columns and arches like a church.

A strong fleet, precursor of England's future arm of defence, guarded the coasts from further foreign invasion, and soldiers in William's pay, the first record perhaps of a standing army, and under his immediate orders, were a guaranty of peace throughout the kingdom. Brigandage was mercilessly suppressed. Commerce, which had been disrupted through the troublesome times of the past, revived, and ships came across the water from Normandy laden with grain and wine, from the East with silk and oriental treasures, and these merchandise were exchanged for English linen and woollen stuffs, already renowned for their worth. It is recorded that a treaty whereby commerce between the two countries would be facilitated, was concluded at this time between William and the King of Galicia who, had Elgiva survived the journey thither, would have been William's son-in-law, and eagerly taken advantage of by the English who, with strong trade instincts, ever as now were quick to see the advantages of new and profitable commercial fields. A regular and peaceful migration of Normans into England followed the Conquest, especially to the merchant towns.

Each lord of the manor surrounded himself with artisans from across the channel, and we read in the Domesday Book of "Guilbert the Foreigner", "Guilbert the Weaver", "Bennett the Steward", and "Baldwin the Tailor" having settled among the English tenantry at Hastings.

These changes of necessity did not take place at once, but gradually, and in the end almost everything which represented ease, culture and artistic refinement was French—as represented by the Normans—in character. A general fusion of the two races before a century had passed eliminated the line of demarcation between Saxon and Norman-French, of William's time, but many traits in English customs and culture to-day point to the two different sources from which that culture originally sprang.

William had found the Church on his coming to England sadly in need of reorganisation, many among both clergy and laity alike having fallen away from the piety and learning of the time of St. Augustine. And this in part was due to the frequent incursions of unchristian Danes into England in the past years, for in early times the Saxon clergy were alike famous for their piety and learning. Orderic Vital dwells at length upon these periods of Danish domination as the real cause of the ignorant and uncivilised

state of the English on the coming of the Normans. "For a long time before their coming," writes one of their own chroniclers, William of Malmesbury, "the Anglo-Saxon had abandoned the desire after literature and religion, the monk mocked the rule of their order by fine vestments and the use of every kind of food—satisfied with a very slight degree of learning, they could scarcely stammer out the words of the Sacrament; and if any among them understood grammar he was the admiration of all the others:—the nobility given up to luxury and wantonness went not to church in the morning after the manner of Christians, but merely in a careless manner heard Matins and Mass from a hurrying priest from their chambers amid the blandishments of their wives".

To reform and reorganise the hierachy, and set an example to the laity was one of William's first cares, and to aid him in the task three legates were sent from Rome by Pope Alexander II, while William himself summoned Lanfranc from Caen to personally aid him in the undertaking and as Primate of All England to preside over a series of church Synods of investigation inaugurated about 1070. Lanfranc was of a noble family from Pavia, and was already famous in his own country, Italy, for his knowledge of jurisprudence and his eloquence at court:

at an early age, however, he abandoned a secular career for one of the church, came to Normandy and chose " for its poverty ", the Abbey of Bec as his home. There the fame of his knowledge and eloquence attracted pupils from afar, from France, Brittany and Flanders, and Bec soon became, from being one of the poorest and most obscure abbeys, one of the richest and best known of the time. Lanfranc left the Abbaye aux Hommes, at which he was at the time Abbot, most unwillingly; he pleaded his age, his unworthiness, his ignorance of the language and customs of the " Barbares " as effectual barriers to his becoming Archbishop of Canterbury. But his entreaties were of no avail, William counted on Lanfranc's ability, both ecclesiastical and temporal, to effect the reforms he desired to bring about. Lanfranc was on most intimate terms of friendship with William, who turned to him at all times for advice and counsel, while Lanfranc on his part ever exerted his influence with William for good, for measures of moderation and leniency, especially regarding William's new subjects in the conquered land. " The complete change of hierachy at this time ", writes Lingard, " although accompanied by numerous injustices, was of great advantage to the English nation; it served to awaken the English clergy from that intellectual dullness

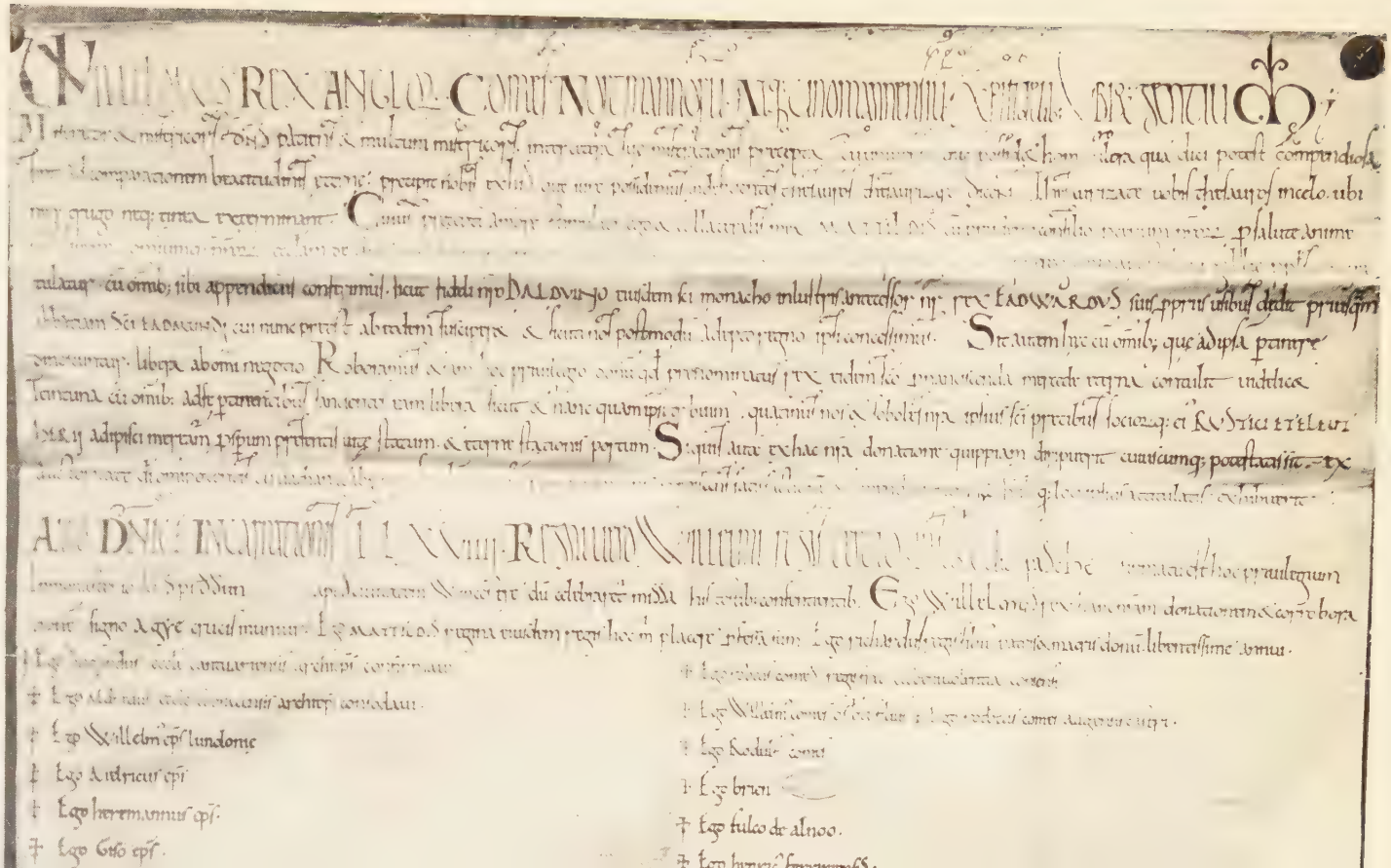
into which it had so long been plunged and to gradually raise them to the level of their foreign brethren." Bishops introduced a severe discipline and dispensed the riches they acquired in public munificence and charity: young seminarists of promise were sent to Normandy to complete their studies at the famous seats of learning of Bec, Jumiège and Caen: Peter's Pence, the levying of which had been lax and uncertain, was collected with regularity and sent to Rome, William, however, at the same time ever strongly maintaining absolute political independence of the Holy See. In short, England, aloof for so many years from continental influence, under a continental King had now the closest relations, both intellectual and material, with continental civilisation. William made no changes of a radical nature in English laws as he found them, merely adding thereto those he deemed wisest from among the Norman.

But ecclesiastical and civil justice was separated, the power of the clergy defined in this regard as having control only of "sins of the soul", secular misdemeanours being no longer under their jurisdiction: the clergy, however, according to their position and wealth were likewise under the same feudal obligations of furnishing men fully equipped for service should William demand

it. William reserved to himself the exclusive right of coining money.

Gregory VII, in writing of William to the Bishop of Die, said " As he has neither destroyed nor sold the churches of God, and has tried to administer peace and justice with moderation to his subjects, has forced the priests to celibacy, and the laymen to give up the tithes they had collected, he has made himself more worthy of approbation and honour than other kings, and has merited that one endures his faults and those of his subjects with more indulgence ".

Of the Saxon laity, William of Malmesbury writes, " Drinking in parties was the universal practice, in which occupation they passed entire nights as well as days: they wasted their substance in feasts, while content with poor and wretched houses, unlike the French and Normans who, in ample and superb mansions, lived with frugality. The vices attendant on drunkenness which enervate men's vigour, followed: and hence it arose that engaging William with temerity and precipitate fury, rather than with military skill, they doomed themselves and their country to slavery, by one, and that an easy, victory. . . . The English at that time wore short garments reaching half way to the knee; their hair was cropped; their arms were laden with golden bracelets; their skin adorned



Photograph of the original Charter in which William the Conqueror confirms a donation made by Edward the Confessor of the patronage of the Abbey of Derhest (Deerhurst), County Gloucester, to the Abbey of St. Denis in France, as well as a gift of the domain of Teinton, County Oxford, to the same Abbey. This latter bequest was originally bestowed on a monk of St. Denis named Boudouin, who had been Edward the Confessor's physician, who transferred the gift to the Abbey. Signed by the Conqueror with his cross, the centre one; the Queen as royal witness on the left, Prince Richard on the right. Dated Winchester, 14th April, 1069. Charter in the Archives Nationales de Paris

Cl. Archives Photographiques-Paris

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with tatooed designs in colour. They were accustomed to eat until they became surfeited and to drink until they were sick. They imparted these last two vices to their conquerors, in other respects it was they who adopted the manners of the Normans. . . . The Normans, that I may speak of them also, were at the time, and are still, particular even to the minutest detail in their dress, fastidious in their food, but eat not to excess. They are a race inured to war, and cannot live without it; fierce in rushing against the enemy; and where strength fails of success, they are equally ready to employ stratagem, or to corrupt their adversaries by bribery. At home in their spacious houses they live with economy. They envy their superiors; wish to surpass their equals and though they themselves plunder their inferiors, they nevertheless protect them from foreigners. They are faithful to their lords, although a slight offence renders them disloyal; they weigh treachery by its chances of success, and change their sentiments for gain. They are, however, of all people the kindest; they render strangers as much esteem as they do their own compatriots, and they disdain not intermarriage with their vassals".

No one measure taken in England at this time is more unalterably connected with William's

name than the Domesday Book,[1] "le rôle royal", the record of the great survey the Conqueror caused to be made throughout his kingdom from 1080 to 1086, as a base for proper taxation and service due from his subjects, both English and Norman alike; everything was recorded in this book, the value of the estate at the time of Edward the Confessor's death and subsequent revalue as it changed ownership, and at the time of the survey: the nature and condition of the soil: names of proprietors and servants: number and condition of inhabitants: feudal services rendered, etc.; everything down to the minutest detail was recorded in this great book, "there was not in it", it was said, "a single rood of land, nor an ox nor a pig nor a cow passed by". The Domesday Book, however, was not simply a list of the spoliation of Saxon land owners, for excluding those and their heirs who had fought at the battle of Hastings, or who had taken part in subsequent open rebellion against William, whose property was confiscated, native landowners after certain formal surrender

[1] This remarkable book in reality consists of two volumes, of which the second is devoted to the three Eastern Counties, while the first, much larger in size, comprises the rest of England, except the most northerly counties, which, for reasons in part not clear, were not included in the Survey. The Domesday Book is kept in the Public Record Office in London.

of their property received it anew from William under stipulated conditions of allegiance and service. Some of these latter are curious: a female, for instance, in free possession of her own land, kept it under condition of furnishing a stipulated supply of food for the King's kennels. The Domesday Book was really a great register of the wealth and human strength of William's new kingdom, both to be drawn upon by him in case of need.

There were few large landowners, however, left among the English, as of necessity the principal Saxon nobles had fought at the Battle of Hastings: the possessions of some of the Normans, on the contrary, drawn from the property which had reverted to the Crown, were vast in extent. William's half-brother Odo, the Bishop, whom he had created Earl of Kent and Lord Chief Justice of England, held 180 fiefs in Kent alone, and over 100 in other parts of England: William's lifelong and intimate friend, Guillaume Fitz-Osbern, held the county of Hereford: Alain, Duke of Brittany, whose marriage to William's daughter Constance had been one of the last joyful occasions in which Mathilde had taken part, received the estates of the dead Morcar, Duke of Northumbria, which he held with the same hereditary rights and privileges as did Hugh Loup d'Avranches,

William's half-nephew, the County Palatine of Chester. With these exceptions no large grants of land were bestowed by William on any one individual, the lesson having been learned by him in Normandy, that concentrated strength and power in other hands than his was a serious menace to the Crown. In cases where unlawful possession of land was proven by the great survey according to the laws laid down by William, the holder was dispossessed, and among those recorded as losing property in this way were several Normans who renounced their allegiance to William and offered their services to Malcolm, King of Scotland, and on receiving grants of land in Scotland became that king's liegemen.

William himself, although austere in his habits, moderate in the expenses of his household and inclined to parsimony in all expenditures except on occasions of state, derived enormous revenue from the Crown lands, not less than 60,000 fiefs, it is said, having reverted to him to be bestowed by him at will. His yearly revenue is reported to have been nearly four hundred thousand pounds sterling. The record of these spoliations and grants are all recorded in the Domesday Book, and many are noted as well in the old chronicles.

But if strangers found fortune in England

so did many of the Saxons dispossessed, or chafing under Norman rule, seek theirs anew in foreign land. Some even made their way to Italy and Sicily and there served the compatriots of those self-same Normans whose rule they were loath to obey at home. Others, still further afield, are chronicled as in the service of the Emperor of the East, at Constantinople, where, enrolled in a special corps for positions of trust and fidelity, even then well-known Saxon characteristics, they guarded the imperial person and palace, the keys of the city and the public treasure. But if many in the highest class suffered by the change of government the Norman Conquest undoubtedly helped to raise a most wretched and unhappy set of people, for it was William, according to William of Malmesbury, "who abolished the infamous custom of these ill-disposed people who used to sell their slaves into Ireland."

In 1086, the year that the Domesday Book was completed, a great review took place on Salisbury Plain, one of the most significant scenes perhaps recorded in history, for there Barons, nobles of every rank and station, and landowners, the chiefs from among their retainers, some 60,000, each individually and in turn knelt before William, and, hand between his, promised him fidelity—"I do become your liege man of

life and limb and earthly worship, and faith and truth I will bear unto you to live and die against all manner of folks, so help me God ", the same oath which to this day the heir to the British throne, on attaining his majority, makes on bended knee, in act of homage to his Sovereign.

William had united England, hitherto divided by factional interests, had awakened a national ambition, had established the principle that whatever duty a man might owe to an inferior lord, his duty to his Sovereign Lord, the King, came first. William had found the feudal system already existing in England at the time of the Conquest, but he organized it and made the power more dependent in himself. William was perhaps the most absolute monarch who has ever occupied the English throne, and for the first time it was an united England over which the King reigned.

The Norman Conquest may justly be considered the greatest historical event since the fall of Rome.

CHAPTER XIII

Odo Bishop of Bayeux acting Regent of England—A fomenter of trouble—His inordinate ambitions—Desires the Papal throne—Expedition prepared to that end—William apprised bitterly arraigns his brother's treachery—Arrests and imprisons him—Question of the Vexin between William and Philippe I of France—The King of France's coarse jest—William's retort—Invades the Vexin—Taking and burning of Mantes—William receives mortal wound—Campaign summarily ended—William carried to Rouen—Removal shortly to St. Gervais—William prepares for his end—His discourse—Desires Guillaume le Roux as his successor in England—Sends Guillaume to England bearing letter to Lanfranc.

CHAPTER XIII

"L'esprit humain a besoin de s'exercer, et de se fortifier par les études assidues, et de se former sagement aux vertus par la connaissance des choses passées aussi que par l'examen des choses presentes, pour le service de l'avenir. Chacun doit apprendre comment il doit vivre chacque jour et pour sa propre utilité avoir sans cesse devant les yeux les examples mémorables laissés par les anciens héros."

Orderic Vital.

The closing years of William's life were not less embittered than had been those of his youth by members of his own immediate family, whose interests should have been most closely allied to his, by every bond of affection and gratitude.

Robert, a perpetual fomenter of trouble, was an exile and it was William's half-brother, Odo, who had often taken Robert's part in the family dissensions, who assumed as it were the rôle, little worthy of him, his nephew had played. Bishop of Bayeux, Earl of Kent and Hereford, Lord Chief Justice of England, and Regent during William's frequent absences in Normandy, Odo's wealth rivalled, and sumptuous way of living excelled, that of the King himself.

Odo was a man of intelligence and ability, and had done much at the beginning of the

conquest and during William's subsequent reign in England to help his brother. But increasing power had engendered ambition, wealth, avarice. He became as the years went on a tyrannical and rapacious administrator whose ambition was insatiable, whose pretentions knew no bounds. The second King of England he was called; his ambition would have made him first. But if the crown of England was unattainable the Papal tiara might well be his, and a soothsayer having foretold that the successor to Gregory VII would be an Odo he determined to make himself Pope.[1]

The marvellous achievements of the Guiscards in the South may have had perhaps not a little to do with turning Odo's ambition toward Italy: with the Guiscards ruling in Apulia, Calabria and Sicily, and Odo occupying the Papal throne, entire Italy might well be brought under Norman domination.

Odo secretly dispatched emissaries to Rome well supplied with money, that by judicious gifts the way might be paved, when the moment arrived, for his election. A house, too, "with marble columns" was bought for him in the Eternal City, and magnificently furnished, awaited his coming.

[1] Otto of Ostea succeeded Gregory VII. The name is variously written, Odo, Odon, Otto, and Eudes.

While it is never suggested that Odo sought in any way to encompass Gregory VII's death, it is equally certain that he left no means untried that would procure him the Papal throne once it was vacant. A vessel was fitted out laden with treasure, and many knights whom one might have thought would have been more loyal to their faith with William, lured by promises of gain and adventure, proffered their services to his brother.

William, in Normandy, apprised in secret of these preparations, crossed in haste to England and surprised Odo, who, profiting by William's absence and his own Regency, thus making his crime more heinous, was about to set sail, his vessel lying in readiness off the Isle of Wight.

William descended like a thunderbolt, seized the vessel and treasure destined for the expedition and summoned Odo before a Council of Nobles hastily convened together on the island. Before them all, William burning with righteous indignation reproached his brother in bitter terms of having abused his power as Lord Chief Justice of England, of having shown himself a tyrant in the realm entrusted to him as Regent, of having oppressed the poor, and by his avarice of having despoiled the church, and lastly of having enticed knights who were needed at home for the defence of the realm from foreign invaders,

knights bound to their king by oaths of fidelity, to forswear that allegiance to follow him beyond the Alps in vain schemes of domination for himself. "Duty demands that such culpable temerity be repressed: and no favour prevent the punishment of one who has betrayed a public trust." "Arrest that man," said William pointing to Odo, "and cast him into prison under strong guard." No one in the assembly obeyed William's order; no move was made to carry out the King's bequest; none dared lay hands on the Bishop, a Prince of the Church.

Then William with his own hands arrested his brother. "I am a clerk and minister of the Lord" cried Odo resisting: "it is not lawful to condemn a Bishop without the sanction of the Pope to whom I shall appeal." "I meddle not with clerk nor prelate", replied William hotly with Norman astuteness, "I do not imprison the Bishop of Bayeux but my vassal the Earl of Kent, Regent of England, the mal-administrator of an office of trust, an unfaithful servant of the King to whom he must render an account of his actions." "Take this man," again commanded William, "confine him in prison, and as long as I live he shall not be free."

Odo's property was confiscated, and he was taken to Rouen and imprisoned in a tower of the castle, where in spite of the endeavours of

Gregory VII to secure his freedom he was kept for five years, that is to say until William's death released him.

Odo's imprisonment took place in 1082, the year before Queen Mathilde's death. And with Queen Mathilde's passing all happiness seems to have left William, good fortune to pass him by. His health broke, his iron nerves showed the strain of his life of strenuous activity: his corpulency was great, his size especially about the girth enormous: suffering from some internal disease the exact nature of which is not known, he was forced for long periods at a time to keep to his couch and follow a restricted diet.

During one of these periods of enforced inactivity Philippe I, ever jealous of William's increasing strength and power, ever seeking some means to humble his too powerful vassal, to harass him in his duchy, made a coarse jest in reference to William's increasing size to the effect that the Conqueror was long a-lying-in, and would need many candles for his churching. Repeated to William, as was the intention no doubt, William swore by the "resplendor Dé" that his churching would be at Notre Dame de Paris itself, with ten thousand lances in lieu of candles, and that all France would be aflame.

There was ever the question of the Vexin

rankling between the two monarchs, and since Philippe had given asylum and active support to Robert in his conflict with his father, the question had been more acute. Philippe demanded that William pay him homage. William replied he would render his over-lord the King of France homage for Normandy, but not for England, which he himself had conquered by the might of his sword, and called on Philippe to desist ravaging Norman territory in proximity to the French border.

The Vexin, that is to say the Eastern part of Normandy, comprised between the Epte and the Oise, had been given William's father, Duke Robert, by Henri I, Philippe's father, as recompense for Norman aid in re-establishing him on his throne, from which Henri had been driven, with the Queen Mother's help, by his younger brother. This however had not prevented Henri from retaking the Vexin during William's minority, and of annexing it anew to France. William, on coming into power, occupied with the more serious question of keeping his dukedom, and later of conquering England, had let the matter drift, but it was ever a thorn in his side and Philippe's affront was but an excuse to begin a campaign to recover the territory he claimed as by right Norman.

As soon therefore as William had recovered

from the illness which laid him low, and gained sufficient strength he entered the Vexin at the head of his soldiers. It was a fertile province the Vexin, of wheat, of vine and orchard; the grain was yellow, ready for the harvest, the grapes hung in luscious ripeness; the leaves in the orchards almost hidden by the apples with which the boughs were laden down. Fire and devastation followed the Norman army: what grain could not be used was trampled down by the horses or burned; the vines were uprooted and thoroughly destroyed; villages razed, the cattle taken; the inhabitants dispersed; where there had been a land of smiling bounteous plenty there remained but burnt stubble and smouldering ruins; the French powerless to retard, fleeing before the fury of William's onslaught, not able to prevent onward in his fiery path of vengeance William's arrival at Mantes, at the very gates of Paris.

William besieged and took the city and burned and pillaged it, many inhabitants perishing as their homes were destroyed; the heat of the burning buildings rivalling the fiery rays of an August sun. Even the cathedral was gutted by flames. William seemed to be everywhere at once exhorting, encouraging, marking well the progress of destruction caused by Norman hands. But this victory of fire was to be William's

undoing, for while riding thus furiously mid heat and smoke and falling timbers his horse stepped on some smouldering cinders, grey outwardly but glowing beneath, reared suddenly, partially unseating William, throwing him at the same time with such violence against the high pommel of his saddle as to inflict a mortal wound : the fury of his passion, the weight of his armour and the great heat, contributed to bring on fever, and greatly increased the infection in his wound. The campaign of vengeance came to a summary end, and William, suffering great agony, was carried back to Rouen, which but such a short time since he had left with eager anticipation of victory over the French. There in Rouen he lay in agony for days, and unable longer to endure the noise and confusion of the city about the castle was moved at his command to the monastery of St. Gervais, at that time without the walls and not as now within the city. At St. Gervais there were only the friars of St. Benedict, the order of which William was a lay brother, leading their daily life of prayer and study, and the peace of the countryside about him. Gislebert Maminot, Bishop of Evreux, and Gontard, abbot of Jumiège, considered two of the ablest physicians of the time, accompanied and administered to the Royal patient. For six weeks William lay at St. Gervais, and although his body was rent

by suffering his mind remained as clear and active as ever.

William well knew that his illness was mortal, and prepared in every way to that end. He ordered that money be sent Mantes for the rebuilding of the cathedral and other buildings dedicated to the service of God, the destruction of which lay heavily on his conscience, and likewise directed that a large sum of money be distributed among the poor: he sent his crown and sceptre, the chalice set with precious stones, the chandeliers of gold and other royal ornaments used at his coronation as gifts to St. Etienne at Caen: these and all other bequests being done in due conformance to law, drawn up in William's presence by notaries and confirmed by Royal writ. He liberated, "that God in his mercy might show him compassion," all prisoners both Saxon and Norman, excepting his half brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, held for political reasons, but not before they had sworn to his ministers not to trouble the security of the State but in every way to maintain the peace both in England and Normandy: in some cases property previously confiscated was restored to their owners. Among the prisoners thus released was King Harold's brother Ulforth. But in spite of the entreaties of his half brother, Robert Earl of Mortain, and of various prelates and nobles, William

absolutely refused to consider the release of Bishop Odo. "My death," said William, "whether I will it or not, will grant him the freedom I now deny him."

William's sons Guillaume le Roux and Henri were with their father during these weeks of suffering, six weeks in all, but there is nowhere mention of any of his daughters being with William—Cécile, a nun at the Abbaye aux Dames at Caen, Adèle, married to Etienne Count de Blois, whose son Etienne (Stephen) was later intermittently King of England, and Constance, married to Alain Fergant, Duke of Brittany—the distances and difficulties of communication of that time making their absence from Rouen understandable.

The day before his death William summoned the chief prelates and nobles to his bedside and consulted at length with them on Church and State affairs, on the necessity of equality and justice toward all, and reviewed as it were his own life's history, his discourse frequently interrupted by ill-restrained tears and lamentations.[1]

"Friends," said William, "Weighed down and burdened with length of years you see me about to appear before the tribunal of the Great

[1] This discourse abridged here is quoted in almost identical form by both Oderic Vital and Wace.

Judge; my anguish increasing each moment as death draws nearer.

"From childhood I was trained in the use of arms, and I have stained my hands by the shedding of much blood. Nor could I compute the misery I have caused during the sixty odd years that I have lived! The time is come to render my account.

"I was but eight years old when my father, the Duke, condemning himself to voluntary exile, gave over to me the duchy of Normandie; making fifty-two years that I have passed in toil and danger. How many snares have I been unable to avoid? What injuries and affronts have I not suffered? If haply I have defended my life against perfidy and violence have I not seen my dearest friends destroyed by daring traitors? Turchetil, my foster-father; Osborne, son of Herfast, Chief Cup Bearer of Normandie; Count Gilbert who because of his virtues and services merited the name of father of his country, and many others endeared and useful to my people, all were but the victims of the hatred my enemies felt towards me. Nevertheless during these perilous times I had many proofs of my peoples' devotion. Many times it happened that my friends, and above all my Uncle Gautier, were forced to change my dwelling place; even at times during the night, hiding me in the cabin of

some lowly peasant, to conceal me from the dastards who sought my life.

"The Normans are brave, fearless, capable of the greatest undertakings and of conquering every enemy if governed with equal severity, uprightness and wisdom; without a strong rein they quarrel among themselves and thus consume their own energy and strength, for their natural inclination leads them to revolt and sedition, the respect of family ties not being strong enough to prevent it. Even my own relatives, who by nature's laws should have used all their energy to defend me, rose up in numerous conspiracies against me to wrest from me my patrimony.

"Guy de Bourgogne, son of my Aunt Adebize, repaid my benefits with base ingratitude. I received and treated him with brotherly affection; I bestowed upon him Vernon and Brionne together with other states of importance. What use did he make of my favour? After having spread abroad injurious reports, after having publicly branded me bastard and a degenerate, and unworthy of power, he forgot the oath which bound him to serve me, in so far as to take up arms against me, at the head of many of my friends whom he cowardly bribed. I vanquished him; and with God's help between Caen and Argentan he felt the power of my arms. I drove him to Brionne, and I knew no rest

until I had delivered my Kingdom from this serpent.

" My two Uncles, Mauger, Archbishop of Rouen, and Guillaume d'Argnes his brother, in open rebellion against me, I was also obliged to punish ; but moderation hindered my justice, which demanded perhaps a more rigorous chastisement than I inflicted . . .

" How much chagrin and trouble have the French not caused me ? Henri taking advantage of my youth tried to seize my inheritance, or impose upon me an unjust yoke : twenty times he entered my territory when my subjects least expected him, and his first endeavours were oft-times as terrible as his menaces. How many valiant men he led to their death in Normandie, and how many times was my sword and those of my soldiers steeped in the blood of the French ? Doubtless there are some here who still recall the powerful army, which Henri divided into two corps, one of which he commanded in person. He entered the earldom of Evreux like a fury and extended his ravages to the borders of the Seine . . . I fought the enemy in all places where he encroached on my territory, permitting him no advantage which did not cost him dear, until my troops having vanquished on all sides, at Mortimer I drove from my estates the ravishers of my wealth, the destroyers of my peace . . .

"It is not fit that I should now give way to pride in my victories; but are there any that can boast of having vanquished me? My greatness made many jealous, and how many of my enemies, for this reason alone, found me odious? But owing to God's aid, in which I have always trusted, I have never had enemies that one could call victors; let one question the Bretons, the Angevins, the French, the Flemish. It is not necessary to name the English.

"The Royal Diadem, which no ancestor of mine has worn, has long adorned my brow. To whom is this honour due? Not as you will know to hereditary right, but to divine help alone which has always favoured my arms. But to what fatigues and perils has not this new greatness exposed me? All Europe appeared in arms against me; Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway; and in the heart of my own kingdom can one name a single province which has not revolted, and which I have not been obliged to almost reconquer several times? . . .

"I had vanquished my enemies, and tranquil after many difficulties and troubles, the last years of my life would have been most happy if the ambition of an ingrate,— . . . but I choke with a just resentment, and no matter in what part of the world my son should be, let him learn that I pardon him. Nevertheless his ingratitude,

and that of my brother the Bishop of Bayeux, have been the severest trials with which heaven has afflicted me. But although man's ambition rejoices over victories won, a tender conscience still persists in reproaching me with acute uneasiness at the recollection of too many acts of passionate violence. It is to you that I now appeal, O Priests and Ministers of the Lord, entreating you to commend me to Heaven in your prayers, that I may, through your piety, obtain pardon for my excesses ? I order that the treasure I have acquired be distributed among the Churches and poor, that I may at least have the consolation of knowing that it is employed for the Glory of the Saints. You yourselves should recall how much I have loved you, and what zeal I have always shown in your defence. Not only have I never done injury to the Church, but I have always shown it the respect which is its due. None have seen me sell benefices for money, neither bestow them from interest nor favour. In my appointments I sought both merit and learning, and my rule has ever been to confide the Government of Churches to the most worthy ; you have the proof in the choice which I made of Lanfranc for the See of Canterbury ; of Anselm for the Abbey of Bec ; of Gerbert for that of Fontenelle, of Durand for Troars, and in a great number of other pious and learned ecclesiastics whose fame

is not bounded by my estates alone. From among these men of purity and wisdom I chose my companions, and ever gave heed to their counsel. In commerce too I sought advice of honest men which it was my joy to follow. I found nine Monasteries and one Nunnery established in Normandie by my Ancestors which you are not unaware have been strengthened both in numbers and wealth: Seventeen for Monks, and six for the other sex have been established under my rule. These are the Citadels with which I took pleasure in providing Normandie. If I have not founded them all myself, I have at least enriched them by liberality and the confirmation of the most favourable ordinances. Since childhood these interests have been ever before me and I trust that my successors, to whom I leave them as a part of my heritage, will maintain them for ever. These are the examples I exhort my sons to follow in me.

"Before the Battle of Hastings, which made me master of England, I gave Normandie to my eldest child Robert and the greater part of the Barons have already rendered him homage. Nor could I now think of taking from him an honour so long accorded him. But I know only too well what misery must needs be expected in a Kingdom of which he is Master. He is proud, unbalanced and foolish, and for a long time

has merited humiliation by some severe abasement; let him enjoy nevertheless the heritage which comes to him by right of birth.

"As regards England I name no successor. I leave the disposition of that crown in the hands of the Eternal Creator, from whom I received it, and in whom I recognise my dependence. England was not mine by heritage. I owe it, with the help of Heaven, to the force of my arms, and to be just I have perhaps at times abused the rights of conquest. Harold, it is true, was a perjurer who merited the punishment of which Heaven made me the instrument, but what streams of innocent blood have I not caused to flow in the punishment of a single guilty one? I treated the English with the excess of rigour. For political reasons I took from them their estates which hurt, only too often, native justice; hunger, fire and the sword have sometimes been used for my vengeance with too little moderation, and I cannot recall without remorse the cruel deeds by which I punished the repeated insurrections of the Northumbrians. I do well therefore in not disposing of a Kingdom of which I acquired peaceful possession, but by an infinite number of abuses. It is to God that I give it over, in the just fear, should I name a successor, he would but add his faults to mine.

"But should I express a wish I desire that my

son Guillaume, who since childhood has been rarely separated from me, and who has always shewn me every respect, might be acceptable enough to the English for them to desire him to reign in my place, and, should it be the divine will, fulfil his duties for a long time with as much virtue as glory."

Henri, on hearing the depositions made in favour of Robert and Guillaume, exclaimed tearfully: "And I, my father, what doest thou give me?" "I bequeath thee," replied William, "5,000 'livres'[1] of my treasure." "But what shall I do with this money if I possess neither land nor home?" "Be content," William replied, "with your lot my son and have confidence in God; suffer in peace that thy two elder brothers precede thee: Robert will have Normandie, Guillaume England, and when the time is fulfilled thou wilt inherit all that I have acquired and thou wilt surpass thy brothers in both riches and power."[2]

William's vision was prophetic, for it was to Henri that eventually and before many years the Conqueror's Crown and Coronet passed:

[1] An obsolete coin varying in value in different countries. In parts of the Auvergne to-day in country churches the offering given individually at the collection is stated each time in a loud voice, in livres, a livre being 50 centimes.

[2] William of Malmesbury chronicles that Henri in addition inherited his mother's fortune.

Photograph of the obverse and reverse sides of William the Conqueror's great seal in the Archives Nationales de Paris. The seal is of wax, cast originally from the seal matrix — which were generally of bronze, and destroyed after the Monarch's death — and as was customary in the XIth Century, was attached to the document by means of thongs, or cords, and not "en placard"—that is to say, not affixed to the face of the document as had heretofore been the custom. William as Duke of Normandy used the seal in which his effigy is equestrian, mounted and armed for battle; the obverse of the seal. As Conqueror William copied the seal of Henri I of France, the seal of Majesty, the effigy of the King enthroned; the reverse of the seal.

Cl. Archives Photographiques-Paris

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and it was Henri who as a wise and able administrator in both Kingdom and Duchy carried on the lustre of the Norman line. William, in view of the designs he had for his second son, and deeming it best that he be on the spot, wrote a letter to Lanfranc setting forth his wishes, signed it, affixed his royal seal and bestowing a parting blessing on Guillaume, embraced him long and tenderly and bade him speed with all haste to England, that the influence and power of the great Archbishop, who had ever served William well in days adverse or prosperous, might now be exerted in obtaining the crown of England for his favourite son.

CHAPTER XIV

Absence of William's nearest relatives at his death-bed—The reason—Panic of those about him, and in Rouen at his death—Funeral arrangements—the ship of mourning on its journey from Rouen to Caen—Fire at Caen breaks up the solemn funeral procession—Ascelin in St. Etienne demands price of William's grave—Tragic events at William's burial—Monument erected to William's memory by William Rufus—Desecration of tomb in the XVI Century.

CHAPTER XIV

" La condition du riche et du pauvre est la même : également ils deviennent la proie de la mort, et de la pourriture . . . car toute chair est comme l'herbe, et toute gloire comme une fleur. L'herbe se dessèche, et la fleur tombe ; mais la parole de Dieu dure tout l'éternité."

Orderic Vital.

And so it was that there was no one of those nearest to William with him when the end came, for although his death was expected it was as it often happens to those watching and waiting unexpected in its suddenness.

Guillaume Le Roux had reached the coast and was about to embark at Wissant, a port near Boulogne, for England. Henri was elsewhere than by his father's bed side, absent at his bidding no doubt, for knowing as we do from history, the nobleness of Henri's character, it is hard to believe that " he had hastened elsewhere to weigh and secure his treasure—the 5,000 livres—and to put it in a place of safety in a strong chest, secured with good locks ".

Robert Earl of Mortain, one of William's half brothers, had doubtless left St. Gervais chagrined at William's refusal to release the other brother, Bishop Odo, from prison.

On Wednesday, the 8th of September, the day following the one William had largely devoted to arranging his temporal affairs, the pain which intermittently for so many weeks had racked his body, on this to be his last day on earth, relaxed its grip at evening, and yielded to the dull anodyne of mortification. Gilbert Maminot knew the meaning of this, and whispered it to Goutard; but Bishop and Abbott deemed it wise to postpone the administration of the last rites till the morning, and prepared to keep watch. All through the night the attendants, now slumbrously awake, and now fitfully dozing, were undisturbed by start or cry of pain. A waxen torch cast its mellow flicker on the walls of the room, and by the lessening of its bulk marked for any who might languidly regard it the steady lapse of the monotonous hours, for no bell rang for matins in the adjacent church: all was hushed and kindly still. And who shall say how the sufferer was employed? Yesterday he made a full and detailed avowal to children and attendants of the errors of a career eventful from the first. Is memory now reweaving all this chequered panorama? . . .

The day broke; the growing light recalled William from his reverie; the great bell at the

Cathedral down in Rouen began to toll and the sound floated up through the clear air soft and full. He asked what it meant. "Sire," was the reply, "it is the bell for prime at St. Mary's." Then William raised his eyes to heaven in a transport of devotion, and stretching forth his hands, exclaimed: "To my Queen, God's Holy Mother Mary, I yield myself; and may she by her holy prayers reconcile me to her dearest Son our Lord Jesus Christ."

The arms dropped upon the coverlet and the jaw fell. William had not received the last unction and his attendants had made sure that God would not let him die without it. This was a preliminary seizure but certainly not death. And so taken off their guard, they did what they had been rehearsing, lifted him from his couch to stretch him on the floor,—for only thus might a Christian die, on a carpet of sackcloth on which ashes were sprinkled in the form of a cross, on the bare pavement arms outstretched, or should death overtake afar from sheltering roof, or dwelling, on the ground, or the grass of meadowland—when even as they did so, the truth in all its horror flashed on them. Terrible always, he was worse than terrible in this new mood of his.

They had thought him their conservated dying king; it was an unanointed corpse they were handling!

Panics like these are instantaneous, and in an age like that were irresistible. Bishop, Abbot and Earl quailed under the shock and their reason overborne by dismay and horror, they fled from the chamber of the dead.[1] They fled too that they might apprise the Monks as soon as might be of the dire event, the members of the community being at the time in the Chapter-House following the office of prime.

Thus in the fifty-ninth year of his age, the twenty-second of his reign, the fifty-second of his duchy, the th8 of the ides of September; (September 9th) in the year of our Lord 1087 William the Conqueror yielded up the Ghost.[2]

There was great consternation among the people at Rouen when they learned that their Duke was dead, the Duke under whose strong hand Normandy had enjoyed for so many years order and prosperity. They were fearful for the future; confusion prevailed and, as if drunk with wine, men ran hither and thither asking advice of wife and friend and chance companion met by the way. Many too sought

[1] This account by Martin Rule in *Life and Times of St. Anselm*, seems to be on the whole the right account of an event which has by some writers been invested, with little foundation, with additional and unnecessary horror.

[2] The room where the Conqueror died no longer exists. A plaque in the church of St. Gervais commemorates the fact of his death in the Abbey.

to hide their treasure in places of safety fearful as if a foreign foe was within the land. The news of William's death, it is related, was known the same day that it took place, both in Rome and Calabria.

In the absence of William's immediate family a Count Heluin, who may well have been a relative of William on his mother's side, although this is not stated, took charge of the funeral arrangements. The body was embalmed according to Royal custom.

William, as had doubtless been his wish, was to be buried in St. Etienne at Caen. All preparations concluded, William's body was borne reverently from St. Gervais: priests in rich if sombre vestments, with Guillaume Bishop of Rouen at their head, and monks and friars in the garb of their different orders, led the funeral cortège with crucifix aloft and swinging censers through the dense mass of William's subjects, whose work and daily task laid aside, awed and silent at the catastrophe which had befallen them, mid solemn chant and tolling bells, accompanied their Duke on his last journey through Rouen to the banks of the Seine.

There a boat was in readiness, a boat like unto those in which William had so often made his journey to and fro from England; like those depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry, with prows

upcurving high above the water, the ends carved with dragon heads ; with place for thirty oarsmen, with sail ready to be unfurled at command.

The coffin was put in a place of safety below deck, fearful lest storm or waves should do it hurt during the two days trip by river and sea. Priests in turn guarded the Duke in death, and prayed for his soul's repose.

Scarce had the towers of Rouen disappeared from view, the sound of bells died away, than to the right as the funeral ship sailed with the stream toward to sea, arose anew the sound of bells borne with the wind, and the two lofty towers of Jumiège came into sight ; the monks on bended knee lining the bank to watch and intone the Miserere as the ship passed the monastery which owed so much to William, and which he in turn so dearly loved.

Past meadow lands and forest, with groups at times of wondering awestruck folk, their charge of herd and flock, or implements of toil for the moment laid aside to gaze with wonderment as the ship of mourning passed. Past Lillebonne on the right, where in the castle William had secured by the force alone of his personality the adherence of his turbulent Normans for the conquest : onward past Honfleur, near which was his mother's burial place, and out into the open sea.

The glistening sands of the Normandy coast must have been visible to the left as the ship skirted the shore past Dives, where William had assembled his fleet for conquest, with, further inland, mid rocky crags and pines, Falaise his birth place ; on into the smooth waters of the river Orne, to slowly make its progress against the stream to Caen, some nine miles from the river's mouth.

The same outpouring of the people, with Bishops, prelates and monks innumerable, greeted the coming of the funeral ship at Caen, as had speeded its departure at Rouen, with heads bowed and hearts heavy with apprehension at the passing of the chief who for nearly half a century had ruled over and brought prosperity to the city.

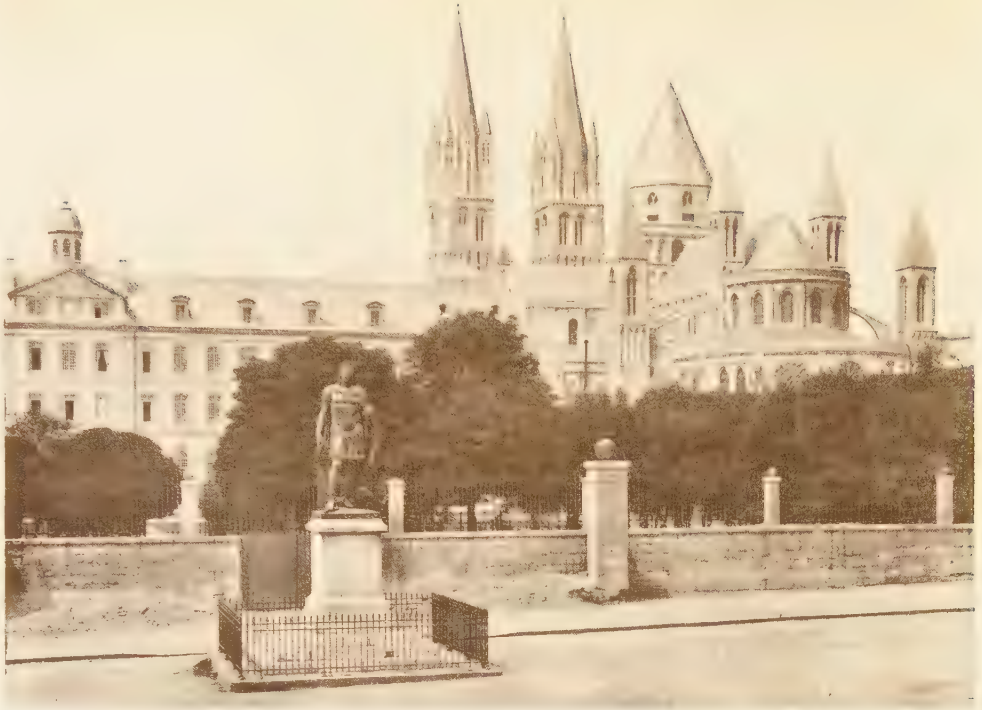
The list of prominent bishops and abbots as given by Orderic Vital is a long one. Among them figures Bishop Odo of Bayeux, again at liberty, a liberty which William had foreseen he was to abuse, and which brought about under William Rufus his banishment for ever from England ; the saintly Anselm Prior of Bec, Gontard Abbot of Jumiège and Manier of St. Evroul at Ouche, and the Bishops of Evreux and Lisieux who had ministered to William throughout his last illness and had accompanied the Duke's body on the journey thither.

The Abbot don Gislebert of the Abbaye-aux-Hommes led the procession which, mid the tolling of bells, with candles alight and censers burning and chant of priests, formed to bear the body of their Duke with reverence and honour to its last resting place in the church of his founding.

And now once again fire for the third and last time was to play its sinister part in connection with William, for as the funeral procession wound its way slowly through the crowded streets volumes of smoke and flame suddenly arose from a near-by dwelling and, unrestrained, spread with force and rapidity from house to house.

With thought of nothing else, mid confusion and excitement, priest and layman alike hurried to help put down as best they might the conflagration which threatened the very heart of the city with complete destruction, and in the end it was the Abbot and the monks alone of the Abbaye-aux-Hommes who, in hurried confusion and scarce audible chant, accompanied the Conqueror's body to St. Etienne, there to await final interment.

At St. Etienne, crowded to its very doors with mourners, the mass for the dead monarch was over, but not the tragic incidents connected with his burial. It was as if the turbulent



St. Etienne, the church of the Abbaye-aux-Hommes at Caen. Founded by William the Conqueror, 1062, as an act of expiation. The Abbey buildings are now used for a Lycèe

Photo., Neurdein, Paris

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discordant elements of the conqueror's nature when living, opposed in death the tranquil oblivion of the tomb.

William's body lay on its bier in state before the High Altar. Don Gislebert, Bishop of Evreux, pronounced the funeral oration, he praised the dead monarch's many virtues, his power in having extended Norman greatness to lengths unattained by any of his forbears; of having maintained both in kingdom and duchy peace and justice, of having suppressed brigandage and disorder, of having advanced and protected the interests of state and clergy, adding "as no one however in his mortal life can live without sin, let us offer up our prayers to God most powerful that He may have Mercy on the dead prince, and should he have done any of you wrong in any way, forgive him from the depths of your heart". As the Bishop ceased speaking, a knight Ascelin, son of Arthur, arose from the dense and wondering crowd and spoke in a loud voice in the hearing of all: "This ground on which you stand was the site of my father's home: the man for whom you pray while yet Duke of Normandy took it from him by violence, by abuse of power alone. That is why I reclaim this land, and openly and before all men. In the name of God I forbid that the despoiler's body should be covered with my

earth, or buried within the bounds of my inheritance.[1]

The burial service thus strangely interrupted continued only after Ascelin's complaint, sustained by several witnesses, was remedied and it was Henri, the dead King's youngest son, Guillaume le Roux being in England, who paid on the spot 60 sous, for his father's grave, promising on a like valuation the price for the remainder of the land claimed by Ascelin.

The coffin was already in place in the vault of stone and masonry, but the unskilfulness of the workmen had scantily estimated the latter's width, and force, and of no gentle sort, was used that the King's body, clad in its royal robes, might enter its last resting place. What now might be expected happened, and in spite of "embalming after royal custom", the results were terrible: incense arising from the censers, and other aromatics hastily scattered about were not sufficient to stay those present, who fled precipitately in horror and dismay into the open. Again and for the third time, officiating monks and priests alone hurriedly terminated the greatly shortened ceremony, that they in turn might flee the church, a church for the moment desecrated with the foul odours of corruption.

[1] Freeman suggests that there may have been two sides to the question, and that it may have been only a matter of some legal inaccuracy in the sale, or transfer of the property.

Guillaume Le Roux (William Rufus), who, as had been the Conqueror's wish, succeeded him as King of England, took pains to erect, as soon as might be a monument over his father's grave, entrusting the work to the goldsmith Othon, a famous artizan as well as banker, a man of position and wealth of the time, to whom he gave a large quantity of gold, silver, and precious stones, commanding that neither expense nor workmanship be spared in the making of a monument worthy in every respect of his father's memory.

Among the many epitaphs submitted, that of Thomas, Archbishop of York, more perhaps because of its author's high office, than for its outstanding merits, was chosen and engraven in letters of gold in Latin on William's tomb.

" Guillaume who governed the intractable Normans ; triumphed valiantly, and reigned with firmness over the Bretons ; and by his valour caused the Manceaux to sheath the sword and submit to his laws ; this great monarch rests here in a truly small urn, and this modest resting place suffices for the remains of this great Seigneur. The sun had already traversed the sign of the Virgin for twenty-three days, when this Prince descended to the tomb ".

No reference to England or the Conquest in this epitaph ; William in death had again

become wholly Norman; his accomplishments as Duke of Normandy those alone chosen to perpetuate his memory.

Some five hundred years later, during the religious wars of the XVI century, Coligny's troops took Caen, and in an excess of religious fanaticism among other works of destruction, broke open and destroyed William's tomb, desecrating, likewise, that of Queen Mathilde's in La Trinité, and scattered the Conqueror's bones afar.[1] A monk of the Abbey rescued and concealed one of William's thigh-bones, which later, when these troublesome times were over and religious toleration again assured, was re-interred in the otherwise empty vault and this one relic to-day under the simple slab of black marble before the high Altar of St. Etienne, is all that remains of what was mortal of William the Conqueror—Normandy's greatest Duke—one of England's grandest Kings.

Robert, as William had foretold, was unable to govern or hold Normandy intact for long.

[1] A monument erected anew to William, in place of the original one was destroyed during the Revolution.

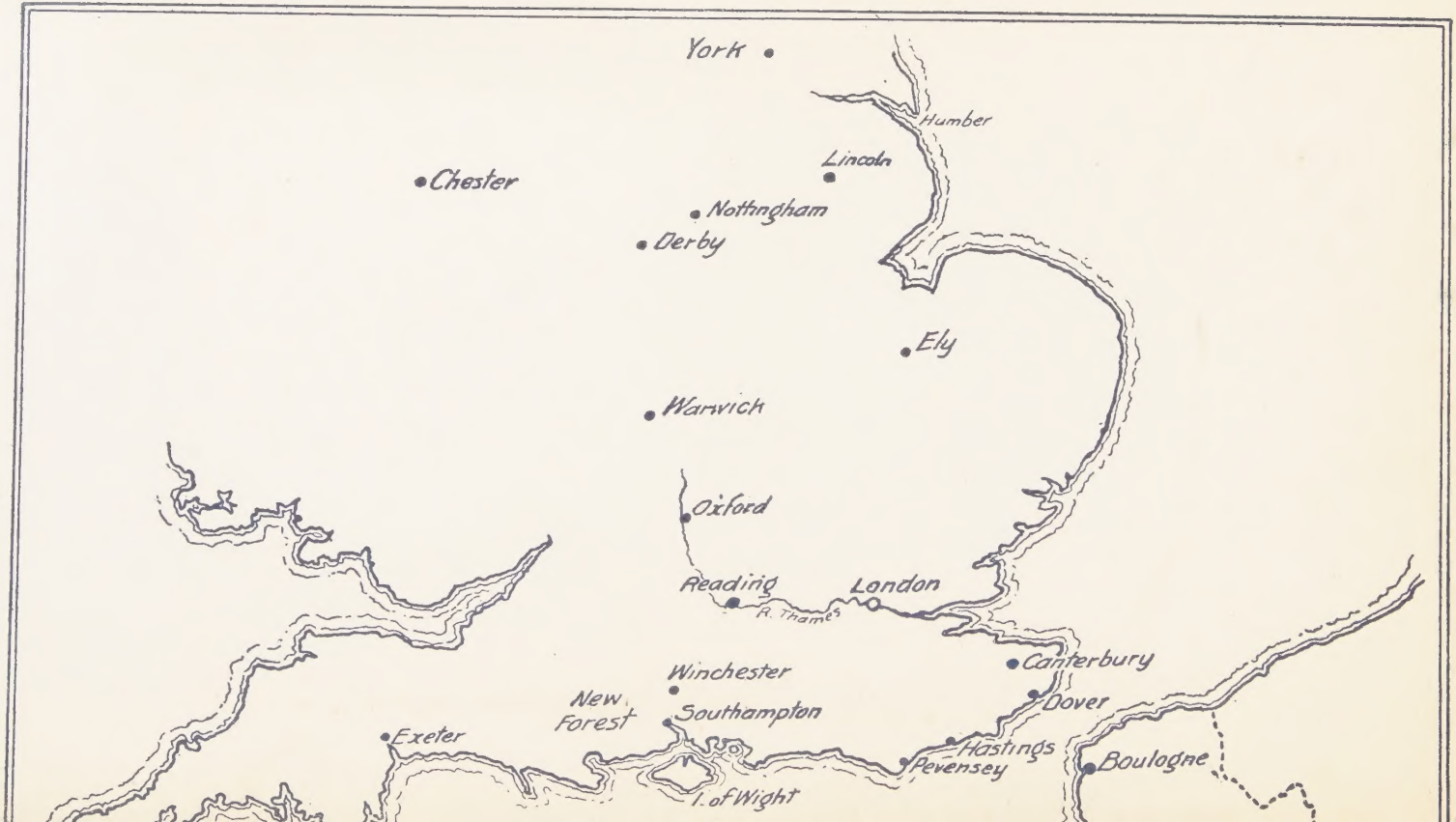
Cities and fortified châteaux slipped from his grasp by force or favour to William Rufus, or others with lesser claims ; he ceded the Cotentin, nearly a third of the Duchy, to Henri, become King, for 3,000 livres, money required by him to satisfy the demands of the profligate young nobles attached to his Court ; satellites whose allegiance was largely measured by gold received. The good order and prosperity of the Conqueror's time gave place, under Robert, to anarchy and want. To prevent the complete disruption of Normandy Henri at length intervened, fought and defeated his brother at the battle of Tinchbray (1106), kept Robert prisoner in Wales until his death, and united anew Normandy with England, under one ruler. Robert died 1134, and is buried in Gloucester Cathedral.

William Rufus, after reigning in England thirteen years, was killed, whether by design or accident has never been quite clear, while following the chase in the New Forest (1100). A cruel despotic and wicked King, he was mourned and regretted by none. Tradition attributes his burial place as under a tower outside the precincts of Winchester Cathedral. A man without conscience or religion, he could have hardly found a resting-place within the Cathedral walls.

Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, having unsuccessfully

headed a revolution in England against William Rufus, in favour of Robert, was banished the Kingdom, and lived thereafter in Normandy. According to Orderic Vital, Odo possessed many virtues, but an inordinate worldly ambition was his undoing. Odo made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1096, died in Sicily and was buried in Palermo, in the Church of Our Lady, where Roger Guiscard erected a fine monument to his memory.

Henri, a wise and beneficent King, ruled in England 35 years. He died in 1135, and is buried in Reading Abbey, which he himself had founded. Henri lost his two sons in the tragic wreck off the Normandy coast, near Cherbourg, of the Blanche Nef, but the Norman succession was secured through his daughter Mathilde's son, Henri II, by her marriage with Geoffrey d'Anjou. The Norman possessions, with the exception of the Channel Islands, were lost to England, and annexed to France, by King Philippe Auguste in 1204. From that time on, the interests and history of the Normans lay exclusively in England, the land of their conquest and adoption, and, through the Conqueror's great-grandson, Henri II, founder of the Plantagenet line, the descendants of William of Normandy and Mathilde of Flanders are known to fame and posterity.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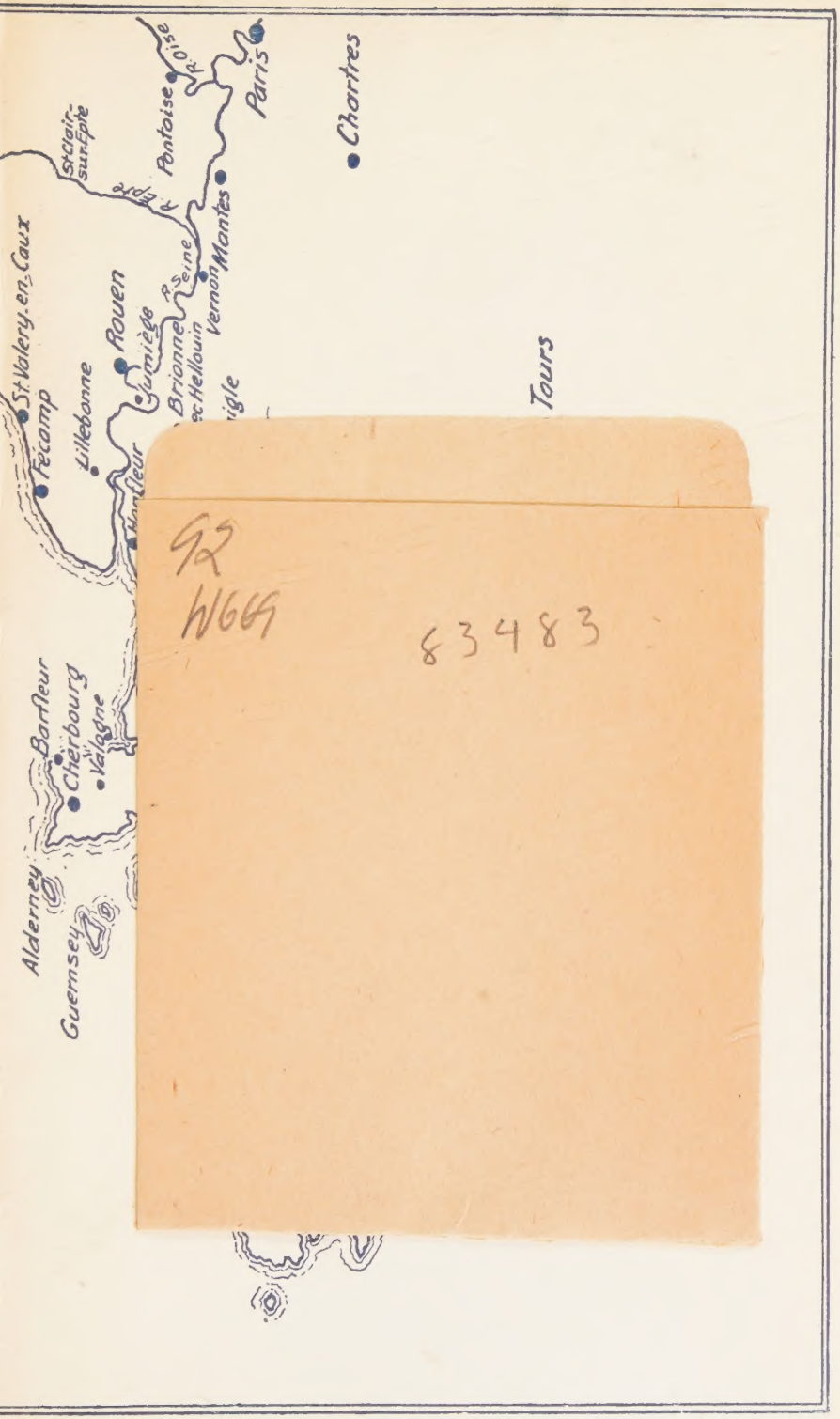

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